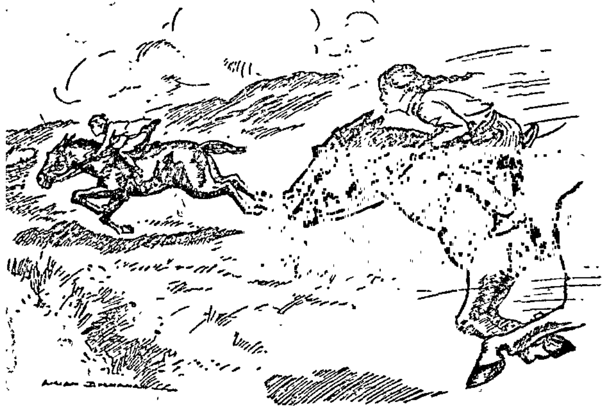
WARNE'S PLEASURE BOOK FOR GIRLS

EDITED BY

MARY ENGLAND

WITH COLOURED FRONTISPIECE
AND NUMEROUS BLACK AND WHITE ILLUSTRATIONS



FREDERICK WARNE & CO. LTD.
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Printed in Great Britain



Contents





The Induna's Secret

by C. Bernard Rutley

"BUT, Uncle Tom, why does the syndicate want your land? You say they have bought up the mortgage, and are going to foreclose in a month's time if you can't pay up, but I'm blest if I can see what they're after. It's only agricultural land, and the syndicate deals in minerals, oil, and such things."

Sheila O'Dare was a tall, good-looking girl of eighteen. She had recently come out from England, on the death of her father, to live with her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Hudson, and her two cousins, Dick and Jack, and it had not taken her long to discover the cause of the anxiety which overshadowed the household.

Now, as she gazed out across the well-tended acres, basking in the light of the African sun, her English spirit rose in revolt against the injustice which a body of rich, powerful financiers were threatening to practise upon the family which had received her with such open-handed warmth.

"It's a shame!" she cried. "Oh! I wish we could find out what they are after, for I am sure there is something crooked behind it all. Haven't you any sort of an idea whatever, Uncle?"

"None, my dear," answered Mr. Hudson, smiling, in spite of his anxiety, at the vehemence of the girl whom he was rapidly coming to regard as a daughter. "I've been told that there are no minerals on the land, and that it's value is purely agricultural; yet, for some reason, the syndicate are bent on getting possession if they can possible manage it. And as I see no chance of paying off the mortgage next month, and know of no one likely to help me, it looks as though they will be successful," he concluded bitterly.

"Well, we've a month anyway," replied Sheila with youthful optimism, "and I'm going to spend my time in trying to discover what it is the syndicate are after. If we can learn that, we'll be half-way towards defeating them."

But three weeks passed away, and though Sheila and her cousins spent

all their spare time trying to discover why the syndicate placed such a high value upon the Hudson property, at the end of that time they were no nearer a solution than at the beginning.

"It's no good, old girl," said Dick, as the trio rode home one afternoon from a visit to a neighbouring kraal where an old induna resided who, they had hoped, might have been able to help them. "N'mji's nearly a hundred years old, and if there is any hidden wealth in the district, or even the legend of a cache of ivory, or something else of value likely to attract the syndicate, he would have known all about it. But what did he tell us? Nothing. Truth is, Sheila, we're beat."

"I suppose the blighters must intend to farm the land after all," joined in Jack, the younger boy. "Perhaps they have some scheme of intensive agriculture they want to try. Oh, it's dashed awful! I don't care about ourselves. We're young. But the thought of Mother and Dad being turned out next week after all the years of hard work they've expended on the place makes my blood boil."

Sheila nodded. It made her blood boil also, but at the moment her thoughts were less upon the troubles ahead than on the old induna, N'mji. In spite of his great age, N'mji had all his wits about him, and, watching the old man whilst Dick questioned him, the girl had received the impression that N'mji was holding something back.

The more Sheila thought on the matter, the more certain was she that she was right, and that N'mji had been hiding something all the time. But what was it? Had it anything to do with the syndicate's desire to gain possession of the land? Something told Sheila that it had and so obsessed did she become with the idea that she hardly touched her evening meal, and far into the night she lay awake wondering how she could make the old induna reveal the secret which she was now absolutely certain he had withheld from them.

The next morning Sheila awoke with the certainty of N'mji's duplicity still firmly fixed in her mind, and, finding that Dick and Jack were engaged for the morning, she told a boy to saddle her horse and rode forth alone.

Intentionally she took the direction of N'mji's kraal, and she was riding slowly along a bush path, deep in the problem of how she might approach the old induna when, chancing to look up, she saw the spotted form of a large leopard stretched along the overhanging branch of a tree some twenty yards ahead.

The animal was watching the path in front, and appeared to be unaware of Sheila's approach. The

next moment a tiny, black toddler came into view, crowing with delight at his daring, and all unconscious of the spotted peril waiting overhead.

What followed took place in a few moments. Sheila saw the leopard crouch preparatory to its spring, and in the same instant, forgetful of personal peril, she uttered a shout of warning and urged her horse forward. The frightened animal reared and snorted, and at first refused to advance. But already the diversion had accomplished its object, for at Sheila's shout the little boy had drawn fearfully backward so that the leopard, launching itself downward at the same moment, missed its quarry by a few bare inches.

For an instant the infuriated beast crouched in the path, glancing this way and that with blazing eyes; then, scared by the plunging hoofs of Sheila's horse, it disappeared, snarling with baffled rage, into the bush. Two seconds later a black woman appeared running frantically along the path, and gathered the frightened child into her arms.

Sheila had saved the child's life, there was no doubt about that, and the black woman was voluble in her thanks. Taking hold of the bridle the woman led the horse towards the kraal, insisting that Sheila must come and receive the thanks of N'mji and the elders, and in a short time the girl was seated on a stool facing the induna and half a dozen grey-haired old men.



The frightened animal reared and snorted.

N'mji was the first to speak.

"The white girl is brave," he began, speaking in halting English. "But for her the leopard would have killed little Lumulo, the son of my son's son, and my heart would have been sad. The thanks of an old induna are hers."

So the little boy was N'mji's great-grandson. What luck! Sheila felt almost thankful to the leopard, despite the fright it had given her. Perhaps now, out of gratitude, the old man would tell her the secret which all Dick's questioning had failed to draw from him the day before.

"I am glad I saved N'mji's great-grandson," began the girl in reply; then, suddenly wise, she stopped, and waited for the induna to continue the conversation.

For several seconds there was silence whilst Sheila felt the old man's eyes studying her intently, but at last N'mji spoke.

"The white girl was riding towards my kraal," he said. "Was she coming to see me?"

"I was coming to see you, N'mji," answered Sheila, forcing herself to speak quietly.

"And what does the white girl require from an old induna?" went on the old man. "But yesterday she and the young baas talked with him, what more is there to tell?"

"There is this, N'mji," answered Sheila boldly. "Yesterday you talked much but told us little, now I would have you tell me why the Baas Hudson's enemies seek to dispossess him of his land."

The old man regarded her blandly.

"How should I know the secrets of the white men?" he asked. "Yesterday I told the young Baas Dick all I know. There is no more to say."

"Oh! yes there is, N'mji," answered Sheila firmly. "Hearken, old induna. I have saved the life of your son's grandson, now in return I demand that you help me to save the Baas Hudson and his wife. A debt is a debt, N'mji."

The girl's earnestness had evident effect on the old man, for presently he dismissed the other elders, waiting till they were out of earshot before he spoke again.

"The white girl is clever," he went on, "for she reads the hidden thoughts of an old man. Also, as she says, a debt is a debt."

Again he fell silent, whilst Sheila waited anxiously for him to continue. When he did it was to ask her a question.

"Can the white girl keep a still tongue?" he asked.

"I can," answered Sheila.

"Is the white girl brave? Will she trust herself alone and at night with an old man for the sake of the Baas Hudson and his wife?"

For some seconds Sheila remained silent. The thought of trusting her-

self alone with a native at night frightened her; then, remembrance of her relatives' plight, and something in the eyes of the old induna facing her, gave her courage, and she nodded her assent.

"That is good," answered N'mji, evidently relieved at her agreement. "I have a debt to pay to the white girl, and I would pay it, even though I break faith in doing so, but for her only will I break faith and no others. Therefore the white girl must promise to tell no one of what I have said, nor to bring anyone with her to-night when the old induna will repay his debt. Does she promise?"

"I promise."

"Again it is good. Now the white girl shall return home, saying that she has been for a ride, and making no talk of little black boys, or leopards, or old indunas. But to-night a hyena shall laugh outside the Baas Hudson's kraal. Then let the white girl creep forth, bringing with her one of those sticks that give light, and she shall find the old induna waiting her. Farewell."

The remainder of the day, Sheila passed in a state of alternate excitement and nervousness. On returning to her uncle's house she had accounted for her absence according to N'mji's instructions, but never had a promise been more difficult to keep. At one moment she wanted to ask her uncle and cousins what they thought N'mji's secret could be; the next she was thinking fearfully of the expedition before her, and was desperately wishing she could ask one of her cousins to accompany her.

But Sheila belonged to the breed to whom a promise is sacred, and, moreover, the girl knew that did she disobey the old man's instructions he would throw her over, and the one chance of saving her uncle and aunt from disaster would have gone. So, despite her qualms, Sheila remained silent, and retired to her room that night without having betrayed her secret. There she dressed herself in a stout riding-coat and breeches, and sat down on her bed to wait.

It was trying work waiting in the darkness, and Sheila found difficulty in keeping her mind from conjuring up unpleasant visions of what might happen to her should N'mji prove to be a rogue. She heard her cousins go to bed, shortly followed by her uncle and aunt. Silence fell upon the house. In the distance a lion roared, to be answered from the opposite direction.

The raucous scream of a night-bird startled her, but still there came no cry of a hyena from the darkness outside the house. Sheila switched on her electric torch and looked at her watch. Eleven o'clock. Surely N'mji would come soon? Another half-hour passed. Had he failed her

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after all? Again a lion roared; then, following so quickly as to seem almost an echo of the sound, there came from close at hand the braying laughter of a hyena twice repeated.

In an instant Sheila was on her feet. It was N'mji's signal, and, carrying her boots, the girl stepped out on to the verandah. Now that the time for action had come her fears were forgotten, and Sheila was only conscious of a vast excitement, of wondering what secret it was the old induna was going to disclose, and how it would help her uncle to defeat his enemies.

"The white girl is alone?"

The voice came out of the darkness, and Sheila felt a sudden stab of fear. Nevertheless, her voice was steady as she answered:

"Alone."

"That is good."

A wrinkled hand grasped one of hers; then, as though sensing her nervousness, N'mji spoke again.

"The white girl need have no fear. She is safe with the old induna. Did she not save the life of the son of his son's son? Now be silent. N'mji goes to a place he has not visited for forty years."

Sheila had no idea of the direction in which they went. It was very dark, and for a time they followed bush paths which twisted hither and thither until presently they came out upon open, rocky ground. Sheila looked about her with interest. The first beams of a rising moon were shedding a pale radiance over the landscape, and she was just able to make out the dark shapes of several small kopjes; and the gaping jaws of numerous deep gullies surrounding them on three sides. It was a wild, fantastic scene, but before the girl had time to take in more than the general aspect, N'mji had produced a strip of cloth, and was binding it over her eyes.

"Have no fear, white girl," said the old man, as Sheila raised her hands in protest. "Have I not said she is safe with the old induna? This is for her own good, so that she can truthfully say she saw nothing. Also this is not N'mji's secret, but one which he holds in trust, therefore none may see the path I follow. Now give me your hand, and follow without fear."

To Sheila the hour that followed was the strangest in her life. Mile after mile, or so it seemed to her, the old induna led her along rocky paths until she became used to being led blindly through the darkness. A silvery radiance, penetrating the bandage over her eyes, told her that the moon had risen, but beyond that she could see nothing, and when at last the old man halted, and removed the cloth, she stood for several seconds blinking in the moonlight before she could look about her.

They were standing in a large cave with a hole in the roof through

which the moonlight streamed in dazzling brilliance. Sheila glanced around her with interest; then, as she turned her head to look behind her, she saw a sight which brought a cry of fear to her lips, and made her shrink back against the old native for protection. Less than six feet away, seated upon a rock, with a long-bladed stabbing spear still grasped in its fleshless hand, and gleaming like ivory in the moonlight, was a huge skeleton.

"Ha, ha! So Umballas can still cause fear," chuckled the old induna. "But fear nothing, maiden. In his lay Umballas was a mighty fighter —I remember how once he slew ten nen unaided—but now he is a dead hing without strength even to lift hat spear he holds. Yet he is a guardian," went on N'mji, speaking o himself, "so it may be as well to speak him fair.

"Umballas," he said, raising his voice, "I come to pay a debt, to do which I must break the oath I swore on the day that you were slain. But she shall take no more than she needs, that do I promise, Umballas, so let us pass, and guard our rear whilst we are in the place beyond. Wow! but thou lookest fine seated there, Umballas, and had I not been a friend of thine I should be afraid."

The old induna took hold of Sheila's hand, and, forcing back her terror, the girl followed him past the ghastly watcher deeper into the cave. And was it imagination, or a trick of the moonlight, but as they passed the grim sentinel Sheila could have sworn that the long-bladed spear was raised slowly in salute.

Presently the moonlight failed, and N'mji came to a halt.

"Did the white girl bring the fire-stick I told her to bring?" he asked.

For answer Sheila slipped a hand into her breeches pocket, and handed the torch to the old man.

"Good," he said, flashing the light on the dark opening of a narrow passage. "There lies our way, if the guardians will let us pass," he went on, leading the way into the passage. "I would aid you, maiden, for did you not save the life of the son of my son's son; yet you will need a stout heart to tread the road before us. Well I remember the last time we passed this way, the Great Ox, and I, and some others. Of those others we left six to watch the road, and Umballas was the last. See, there sits Bofolo just as we left him over forty years ago. Wow! Bofolo, how feelest thou? Does not the time hang heavy, Bofolo, with no wives and no fighting? I am the last, Bofolo, and I go to pay a debt, so let us pass, good Bofolo, I pray you."

With difficulty Sheila repressed the scream of terror which rose to her lips as the torchlight fell upon another grinning skeleton seated in

the same posture as the first. Where was the old man leading her? What awful deeds had taken place in that dark, underground passage? Was N'mji mad? At the thought that N'mji might be mad, Sheila's courage almost failed her; then realisation that she could not return without the old induna's help came to her aid, and she rallied. Why should the old man wish to harm her? She had done him a service, and he had brought her here to pay the debt, a payment which in some manner was to assist her uncle and aunt. Sheila set her teeth, and marched steadily forward, and when the next grim sentinel came into view, and was addressed by the old induna, the girl looked on with outward calm.

Three more of these ghastly guardians did they pass before the old man came to a halt at the end of the passage.

"You have courage, white girl," he said. "Few are there who would have trod that path with Umballas, and Bofolo, and those others watching the way. Soon now I will show you the secret desired by those men who would rob the Baas Hudson of his kraal, thinking that by so doing they may come by their desires."

He laughed, a shrill crackle of laughter which echoed weirdly through that empty, underground place. "Think. Ha, ha! Thinking is the nearest the dogs shall ever get to that which they seek. They may guess that the thing lies within the lands of the Baas Hudson; yet, though they sought a hundred years, never should they find it.

"And when I go to the Land of Ghosts, as go soon I must, there will be none living who know of this path, and Umballas, and Bofolo, and those others shall watch in vain for the despoiler. But come, maiden. Why listen to an old man's cackle? We are almost at our journey's end, though the road ahead still needs courage, though courage of a different kind. Have you a steady nerve, maiden? Behold!"

At the last word N'mji suddenly swung the torch round so that the light fell upon the way ahead, and at the sight which met her eyes an icy chill crept down Sheila's back. Three yards ahead, the sides of the passage fell away into a great cavern of unknown height and depth, and across which the path, reduced to a mere two feet in width, followed the summit of a narrow ridge of rock on either side of which was black, unfathomable space.

"A fearsome path, maiden," said the old man, "and a quick journey to the Land of Ghosts if one should miss one's step; yet not so fearsome as it looks. See, I will go first, and then light the way for you to follow."

Without waiting for an answer, the old induna stepped out upon the dizzy path. Sheila watched him go

with terror in her heart, but at the end of a dozen steps he stopped, and, turning, shone the light back the way he had come. Then the girl saw that the narrow track only extended for a dozen yards before it broadened out again into the floor of a large cavern; yet the thought of traversing those dozen yards still filled her with terror.

Suppose she slipped? She dared not look at the dark depths on either side, knowing that if she did the last atom of her courage would desert her. She might crawl. But N'mji had walked, as though no such thing as a terrible death lurked within a few inches on either side of the path, and could she, a white woman, crawl when a black man walked? Impossible!

Sheila was aware of N'mji's eyes regarding her appraisingly, and, taking her courage in both hands, she stepped out upon the narrow way. For an instant she faltered; then, with an effort of will, she rallied her courage, and crossed the razor-edge path as unfalteringly as the old induna had done.

"The white girl has done well, and her courage is great," praised N'mji in grave tones. "Now she shall have her reward." He turned, and flashed the light into the cavern beyond. "Behold, maiden," he cried, "the wealth of Lobengula, the Great Ox, the Lion, the Mighty One."

Lobengula's treasure! So that was what the syndicate were after. Sheila had heard the legend of the treasure, how, before fleeing from Jameson's forces, the Matabele King with his indunas and several carriers had carried his great treasure into the bush and hidden it, after which the carriers had been killed so that they should never divulge the secret of the hiding-place.

There it lay at her very feet. Sheila's eyes travelled over great piles of ivory, over rotting bags of hide from which gold dust, nuggets, streams of golden coins and diamonds flowed out across the floor. There it lay, and somehow the syndicate must have discovered that the treasure was hidden on her uncle's land. Yet even so how could they hope to find it when none but N'mji knew the secret path, and how did it help—— As though reading her thoughts, the old induna broke the silence.

"I am ignorant of the ways of the white men," he began, "yet something I know, and, if an old man understood aright, the Baas Hudson can save his kraal from the despoilers if he can pay them money." He pointed at the heaped treasure on the ground before them. "Let the white girl take what she needs to help the Baas Hudson and we will go. Already we have tarried long enough, and I, who have broken an oath, would get back to the light again. See, maiden, here is a bag of gold unbroken, and these

diamonds. Enough to save the Baas Hudson and more. Take the diamonds, and I will carry the gold. Now let us go, and remember, white girl, that I have brought you here once because you did save the life of the son of my son's son, but that if ever you should find your way here again, or try to show others the way, then my curse and the curse of the six watchers shall rest upon you. Not that any could ever find this place," he added. "I do but warn you."

"I thank you for the warning, and for your help, N'mji," answered Sheila seriously. "When to-night *is over, I shall forget that I have* ever been here."

"The white maiden *is* wise," replied the old induna. "Now let her follow N'mji, for she must be back before the sun rises."

* * *

The next morning at breakfast, before the astonished eyes of her uncle, and aunt, and cousins, Sheila produced the bag of gold and the diamonds, and laid them on the table.

"To pay off the mortgage," she said simply.

And not all the questioning of her relatives has ever made her add anything to that simple sentence beyond the statement that she had done N'mji *a service, and that he had paid* his debt.



There it lay at her very feet.

The GIRL WHO DIDN'T CARE

by PEGGY CARR



"ONLY one more week!" chanted Chris Lorraine, [illegible] down her racquet after a [illegible] set; "and then—hurrah [illegible] [illegible] ols.!"

"I know—isn't it topping?" agreed Dora Drake, her partner, wiping her heated brow. "It's been a ripping term, but we *have* got to the stage of longing for something different. I'm going to Scotland this year—I'm simply dying for it!"

"We're off to Wales as usual," said Gwynneth Jones, with shining eyes. "Phew, that was a hard game, to be sure!"

"Yes, indeed, whateffer!" mocked Joan Powell, who was Gwynneth's best friend and could tease her as much as she liked. "*I'm* longing for the hols., if you like—it'll be my first visit to Taffyland!"

These four girls, pleasantly tired after their game of tennis, had wandered to a shady corner where several less energetic people were lying under the trees. St. Agatha's School possessed a beautiful garden, and during the hot weather the girls were encouraged to sit out of doors.

"Oh, of course, you're staying with Gwyn, aren't you, Joan?" said Chris, curling up on the warm grass. "I'm going somewhere new, too, this time. I heard from Mummie this morning and she says they've decided on Sark."

"Let's see, that's near Guernsey, isn't it? Lucky dog!" said Nancy Moore enviously. "How long are you going for?"

"All the time!" laughed Chris. "Isn't it marvellous? We're to stay in a fisherman's cottage, and there'll be bathing and boating galore. Just the place for sea-faring folks like us!"

"It sounds lovely, and fancy

going for eight weeks! Father says he can't manage more than three, and we're only going to Bournemouth," said Nancy discontentedly.

"Well, we're only going away for a week, but we'll jolly well make the most of it!" declared lively Kathleen O'Dare.

"Bournemouth should be rather nice," said Dora. "We're only having a fortnight in Edinburgh—and some people don't get away at all. Where are you going, Moyra?" she asked suddenly, addressing a slender dark-haired girl who had taken no part in the discussion.

"To my grandmother's in London—where I spend all my holidays," was the casual reply. Moyra Martin's mother had died years ago, and her father was in India and scarcely ever came home.

"You're going to stew in town all the hols.? How beastly!" said downright Joan.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Dora, who believed in making the best of a bad job. "There are always such heaps of things going on in London—theatres, cinemas——"

Moyra smiled lazily. "My grandmother doesn't approve of entertainments. She thinks they're a waste of time."

"Gosh, does she really? How awful!" said Joan. "Still, you can go about by yourself, I suppose."

"No, she doesn't approve of that either," drawled Moyra.

"Well, then, what do you do?" demanded Kathleen, and the other girl shrugged.

"I get through quite a good deal of needlework. Grannie's chief interest is missions," she said.

"Oh, Moyra, how rotten!" said Gwynneth sympathetically.

"No, it isn't. I don't care," yawned Moyra, and rolled over on to her back, staring upwards through the trees.

"You never care about anything. 'Don't care was made to care!'" said Nancy spitefully, but Moyra did not move.

Chris had been silent for some time, but she had been doing some hard thinking and her forehead was puckered in perplexity. She was thinking of her mother's letter which had come that morning. "There is plenty of room in the cottage," Mrs. Lorraine had written, "and as Dick has already invited Jim Grey to come with us, Daddy and I think that you should bring one of your friends. Choose somebody who will fit in, darling, and ask her for as long as you like."

Well, there were plenty to choose from, thought Chris, a popular person with many friends. The question was—which? Dear old Dora would fit in beautifully, and she would be able to join them when she got back from Scotland. Then there was Kathleen, who was always such good fun. Kathleen would come

like a shot! So would Nancy, who wasn't a bad sort even if she did grouse too much. So, she knew, would half a dozen others.

She glanced round the little coterie, trying to make up her mind; but her eyes kept on returning to the person who was really occupying her thoughts. Moyra had grown so thin and pale this summer; she looked as if she needed a holiday by the sea. Lying flat on the grass, there seemed to be nothing of her, and Chris didn't like the sound of that grandmother who disapproved of amusements. And yet—if Moyra didn't care, why hould she?

"I can't ask her. She wouldn't t in a bit well, I'm sure the boys vould loathe that blasé air of hers. And besides, we've never been riends. I'm not going to ask anyone who'll spoil the whole holiday," Chris thought impatiently, and tried o forget about Moyra. But she ouldn't. She deliberately turned ier back on that fragile figure, but vith her mind's eye she could see it till, and an inward voice whispered o her that whether Moyra "fitted n" or not, she must be given the chance of having a decent holiday.

"Oh, bother it all!" said Chris.

"Why, what's up?" asked Dora quickly.

"Nothing. I was just thinking," aughed Chris, but the feeling of annoyance persisted. Why should one have to worry about a person who deserved it as little as Moyra Martin? "The most selfish girl in the school," one of the mistresses had called her the other day. Certainly the Fourth form had never had a member with less *esprit de corps*. Moyra was lazy, and—which was far worse—she simply didn't try. "I don't care!" she would say, when she had a returned lesson or a sharp reprimand for her slackness at games; and that was the dreadful part. She didn't!

She had been at St. Agatha's more than a year, but she had no real friends. Her inertia was a byword. "Come on, lazy-bones!" the girls would say to one another. "You're getting as bad as Moyra Martin!" And Moyra, if she overheard, would shrug her slim shoulders and smile. She didn't care!

Nevertheless, when the supper-bell rang Chris waited behind the rest until Moyra had risen to her feet in her usual languid way. The contrast between the two girls was very marked: Chris, sturdy and well built, was as fair as a Saxon maiden, with a pink-and-white skin and clear blue eyes, while Moyra, naturally slight, was now much too thin, and her pallor emphasised the darkness of her eyes and hair.

"Moyra——"

"Yes?" Moyra looked round in surprise. Chris, the most sought-after girl in the form, didn't often trouble to speak to her.

"Moyra, I'm spending the hols. in Sark. With the family, of course. There'll be Mummie and Daddy, my brother Dick and his friend Jim, Fay, my young sister, and myself. And I can bring a friend. Will you come?" Chris asked abruptly.

Moyra looked at her. She did not speak.

"Well, will you? It'll be rather fun—picnics and bathing and all that." That fixed regard made Chris quite nervous. "Think it over," she said.

"I don't need to think it over. I'd—love to come. But are you sure—quite sure—I shan't spoil things for you?"

Moyra's question took Chris by surprise—and it was rather awkward, too, because she wasn't at all sure! So she passed it off with a laugh.

"Don't be an ass! Should I have asked you if I hadn't wanted you? But what's your grandmother going to say?"

"Oh, she won't mind," said Moyra, who looked half dazed. "Chris—it is true, isn't it? You *did* ask me?"

"Of course I did, donkey, and you're coming, so that's all right!" laughed Chris, a little embarrassed by the other girl's strange manner. "We start the day after we break up, so you'd better come straight home with me and not go to your grandmother's at all."

And that was what they did, when, a week later, the summer term came to an end and the St. Agatha's girls were released, like so many carrier pigeons, to scatter far and wide.

Moyra out of school was ever so much nicer than she was in it; so much Chris had time to notice on the short journey to her home. The entire family was at the station to meet them, from grey-haired Captain Lorraine, who was well over six feet in height, to little Fay whose seventh birthday was close at hand. Chris had been wondering rather apprehensively what sort of an impression Moyra would make; but she needn't have worried. Completely gone was that too-bored-to-live manner which had so infuriated the Fourth form, and the Moyra who responded whole-heartedly to the Lorraines' greetings was a totally different being.

"A ripping girl, that," Dick said to Chris later that day, and she gaped at him, for he was fifteen—a year older than she was—and getting on so well at Dartmouth that his opinions carried weight. "Just the sort of person for a holiday like this," he went on. "We couldn't have done with anyone who put on frills."

"She doesn't swim," said Chris, lest he should be under a false impression.

"Well, we can teach her," said Dick.

"Such a nice girl, Chris dear!" said Mrs. Lorraine, coming into the room. "I don't know when I've met one of your friends I've taken to as I have to Moyra! And she's so sweet with Fay. I expect she's very popular at school."

Chris muttered something unintelligible, and made her escape. Never before had she witnessed such an extraordinary transformation. It was like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde! She was naturally glad that Moyra had turned out like this, but at the same time she felt rather "sold." Which, she wondered, was the real Moyra—the bored, self-centred girl who had earned the contempt of the Fourth form, or this gay and delightful person whom the family liked so much?

"Oh, well, I shan't tackle her about it," Chris decided that night. "It'll be ripping if she stays like this all through the hols., and when we get back to school—well, she can do as she likes. It won't matter to me—it isn't as if we were friends. And I'm jolly glad she's going to have a holiday."

That being settled, she fell asleep, and when she woke up the following morning there was so much to be done in the way of last-minute packing that she had no time to brood about the mysterious change in her guest. They went over to Guernsey by the night boat from Southampton, which was great fun, and then they crossed to Sark in a little motor-boat. The sea was inclined to be rough, but they liked it and said so, thus incurring the wrath of other, less fortunate passengers. After an exciting hour, during which they passed many smaller rocky islands, they reached Sark itself, and disembarked at Creux Harbour. Here a man was waiting them with one of the ancient "victorias" which abound on this lovely island, and Mrs. Lorraine and Fay got into it, while the others—thinking of the horse—elected to walk up to the cottage.

It was all so new and thrilling, and England seemed so far away, that Chris quite forgot her doubts concerning Moyra, and as they walked up the steep road leading to the heart of Sark they ragged one another like old friends, and made a thousand plans for the coming eight weeks. Dick and Jim, who were both very jolly boys, had quite accepted Moyra by this time, and as they marched along with the tall captain sandwiched between them, several smiling islanders glanced approvingly at the quintet.

The cottage, when they found it, was all that could be desired, and though it was rather a squash for them all to get in, that only added to the fun. It stood on the cliffs, and the nearest way to the sea was down a steep rocky path which led to a small but sheltered bay.

They were all sleepy now, after their long journey, so when they had had a meal they lay down for several hours, and began exploring later in the day. Chris noticed that several times Moyra tried to speak to her alone and guessed that she wanted to explain her change of front; but she knew that if they did begin to speak seriously she might "let fly" on the subject of the other girl's don't-care attitude. So she saw to it that she and Moyra were never alone, but always with the boys, or little Fay; and Moyra must have taken the hint, for she didn't try again.

She was a splendid companion, though. As the glorious summer days sped by, Chris grew more and more thankful that she had chosen Moyra and not one of the others, none of whom would have been so jolly or entered into everything with such zest. The Lorraines were, as Chris had said, a sea-faring family, so they did a good deal of boating and fishing. The coast is so tricky, however, that Captain Lorraine would not let the youngsters go out by themselves, although Dick and Jim were both very capable, and Chris was unusually skilful for a girl.

The weather was perfect, and they lived in their bathing attire, and went into the water whenever it was possible. Moyra, who hadn't been able to swim a yard when they arrived, soon became fairly proficient under the tutelage of Dick, Jim and Chris; and Fay, who had been a water-baby all her life, became so keen that she had to be watched.

Her birthday fell during the last week in August, and all sorts of preparations were made. They were going by boat to the island of Herm, which they had not yet visited, to picnic there, and return by a new route. Good sea-dog that she was, Fay was longing for this, and it was a bitter blow when a letter came the day before her birthday, announcing that some friends of the family were coming over from Jersey on the morrow, on the chance of seeing them.

"Hang it all, that'll muck up the whole day!" groaned Dick. "Look here, Father, can't we start early——"

"No, we can't do that when they're coming over to see us. If they'd given their full address, I could have wired to put them off, but they've only put 'St. Helier,'" said Captain Lorraine, who was quite as disappointed as the rest of the family. "Never mind, we won't all stay in. Your mother and I will be here, and you can have a picnic by yourselves. We'll go to the island some other day."

"Where would you like to go, Fay? You must choose," said Chris.

"Oh, the Eperquerie!" said the child at once. "I like that best of all."

The others preferred Grand Grêve, where the bathing is so good and where there is always a chance of finding precious stones; but it was Fay's birthday picnic, and nobody dreamt of questioning her choice.

The morning dawned fresh and fair, and breakfast was a merry meal. Fay had a good many presents, her favourite being a strange-looking rubber animal which could be blown up like a balloon and ridden in the water. Moyra had sent to London for this, and Fay was wild with delight.

"It's a sea-horse!" she exulted, blowing it up there and then. "I've longed and longed for one! Oh, Moyra, you are a sport!"

Yes, thought Chris, Moyra certainly was a sport, for her grandmother allowed her very little pocket-money, and she must have denied herself a good many things to buy this prehistoric animal for Fay.

"It's a beauty!" said Mrs. Lorraine. "You are a lucky child. Now, my dears, I think you'd better start soon in case the Smiths arrive; you don't want them to find you here and keep you talking."

"Goodness, no!" said Chris in alarm, and dashed into the kitchen to cut sandwiches while the others collected the many and various articles which go to make a picnic.

Very soon they were ready, and set off in high feather. To reach the Eperquerie they had to cross a stretch of beautiful open country, and then descend one of those winding rocky paths with which they were becoming so familiar. As they reached the bay they saw to their annoyance that several other people were already there, but Fay, who was making a little marine garden at the cottage, and had brought a large pail with her to carry home new specimens, didn't seem to mind. She was a purposeful young person, and at the present moment sea-snails were more important to her than anything else.

"Jim and I can go for a walk," said Dick, "and join you later. We couldn't bathe yet, anyway—the tide's too low."

The girls agreed to this, and pitched their camp on the stones underneath some overhanging rocks. Fay wandered off in search of her specimens, and the two who were left kept up a desultory conversation for a time, and finally lapsed into silence. They usually had a good deal to say to each other these days, but Chris had had a letter from Nancy Moore that morning which had rather ruffled her. "How is Moyra?" Nancy had written. "Drooping as usual, I expect! I only hope she won't get a swollen head and think she's 'one of us' next term."

Next term! It was a long way off, but when it came what would Moyra do? Go back to her old

self, or remain the cherry, ready-for-anything person she seemed at present? Chris glanced at her from under knitted brows and realized, as she noticed how brown and well Moyra was looking, that she had grown very fond of this girl. She had never had a best friend, and until now had never wanted one. It was more fun, she had always thought, to have several strings to one's bow . . . But Moyra was different. There was something about her that singled her out from the rest.

The sun was very hot. Chris curled up, a bundle of towels behind her head, and began to doze. She was dimly aware that the other people had left the beach, and then she fell fast asleep.

A touch on her arm roused her, and she sat up with a start. Dick and Jim were beside her, looking rather worried.

"Where are Moyra and Fay?" they demanded.

"Why, aren't they here?" she asked stupidly, and scrambled to her feet. "Fay was looking for beasties and Moyra was with me. They must have gone off together——" And then she saw something that drained all the colour from her face. "Dick! Jim!" she cried. "The sea-horse has gone too!"

It was true. The rubber animal, which Fay had propped against a rock, had vanished.

"But they can't have gone in the water," gasped Dick, "with the tide going out like this. And beside, there's no sign of them anywhere."

Then he realised the dreadful import of his words, and the three gazed at one another in horror. With one accord they rushed down to the water's edge and stood shading their eyes, scanning the calm and shining sea.

"There's something! Over there, by that rock," cried Chris. "No, it isn't—it's only a wave, I think."

"Where? Oh, I see—it's moving up and down. It isn't a wave. It might be—a person." Dick was deathly pale. There was a boat near by, drawn up on the shingle. "I'm going to see," he said briefly. "Give me a hand with it, Jim."

Chris went to help too, and they managed to drag the boat over the stones and get her into the water. The object, whatever it was, was still bobbing up and down by the distant rock, but the sunshine was so dazzling that they could not make out what it was. Dick said he was going alone, but Jim insisted on going too. There was no room for Chris.

"You stand and watch, and if it's a false alarm we'll wave, and you can run and tell someone they're missing," were Dick's last crisp orders as he and the other boy got the boat into fairly deep water, and clambered in.

The Girl who didn't Care



"Where are Moyra and Fay ?" they demanded.

The next few minutes were worse than the worst nightmare Chris had ever known. She would never forget that lonely vigil, or the mingled terror and relief she felt when she realised that it was not a false alarm, and saw Dick and Jim, rowing for all they were worth, making for the rock.

* * *

"Oh, Moyra, what happened?" asked Chris.

It was three hours later and Moyra, who had been unconscious when the boys had brought her back to land with Fay, whose rubber horse had made its first and last journey, was to all intents and purposes her cheerful self again.

She was in bed, of course. Mrs. Lorraine had prescribed bed for everyone, when the sorry-looking cavalcade had returned to the cottage so much earlier than they were expected. Moyra had been able to walk back, with Chris's assistance, but the boys had had to take it in turns to carry Fay.

"What happened?" asked Chris in a hushed voice, as she sat on the edge of Moyra's bed.

Moyra laughed rather shakily. "Nothing much! Fay disappeared behind the rocks and I went to see what she was doing—and she'd got that wretched horse in the water and was trying to ride him. A huge wave came and sucked her outwards—and she didn't let go of the horse—and, well, I went in after her, that's all."

"All!" said Chris. "Why didn't you yell for me?"

"No time. I thought I'd be able to bring her back—I never thought the current would drag us both out like that. We kept going somehow—it seemed like hours—and then we got near that rock. There must have been a submerged ledge or something, because we managed to keep up. There was a jutting-out bit to hang on to," said Moyra, glancing involuntarily at her hands, which had been lacerated.

"Dick says you were holding Fay up when they reached you."

"Yes, she went under before I did. Plucky kid, Fay. I'd never have forgiven myself if anything had happened because of that silly rubber horse." Moyra laughed, or sobbed; Chris wasn't sure which.

"You're the plucky one, I should think. You've saved Fay's life, and we shan't forget." Chris felt as if she might break down too, so she went on talking hard. "I wonder what the girls at school will say when they hear——"

"Don't tell them, please," said Moyra. "I don't care two hoots about them."

"That's the first time you've said that since we've been here. You've got to care!" said Chris.

Moyra smiled. "But I do," she confessed. "That's why I pretend

I don't! I've never been very happy, you see, having no mother, and Father abroad. And when I came to St Agatha's I was so shy and scared of you all that I just had to pretend . . . And so it went on."

"Well, those days are over, thank goodness!" said Chris, giving one of the bandaged hands a sudden squeeze. "Mummie wants you to come to us every hols., and you'd love school if only you'd stop this pretending. Oh, Moyra, do try!"

And Moyra, radiant despite her many cuts and bruises, promised faithfully that she would.



There was a jutting-out bit to hang on to.

So, after all, "don't care was made to care," and the friendship that was formed on that memorable occasion lasted long after school-days were left behind.

THE WRECKERS

By Cicely M. Drury

THE wind howled round the old house in the bay, whistling in the chimney like some lost sea-spirit, whilst the rain lashed against the lattice windows.

"What a wild night!" said Dame Katherine Marston. "Think of the poor sailors and pray that your father is safe in harbour this night, Margaret."

"When do you think he will return, Mother?" asked Margaret.

"It is already three months since I expected him, my dear; how should I know?" sighed her mother.

Margaret's father was the Captain of a merchant ship which had sailed far away to India, no wonder that Dame Katherine was disturbed by such wild weather.

Mother and daughter sewed in silence for some minutes when Dame Katherine said: "It is striking six and Nat has not returned, I pray he has not delayed because of the storm, for how shall I send the cordial and broth to poor old Mother Clarke?"

They waited anxiously for a few minutes, but the serving man did not return. At last Margaret said:

"I am sure Nat cannot be coming, Mother, for when he goes home he is always back by five o'clock."

"What shall I do!" exclaimed Dame Katherine. "I promised the poor body she should have the broth to-night—I cannot send Martha, she is too old."

"Never mind, Mother," said Margaret, "I will take it to her, I care not for the storm."

"You, my child, on such a night!" exclaimed her mother in horror.

But after some discussion she gave her consent, for the poor old soul lay sick and lonely in her tiny cottage.

Wrapped in a thick cloak, with a basket in one hand and a heavy lantern in the other Margaret set out, her mother's injunctions to go carefully and not to tarry ringing in her ears.

Once outside the door Margaret felt the full force of the storm, the wind came in great gusts, nearly sweeping her from her feet, and then, as if annoyed at her resistance, snatched at her cloak, almost dragging it from her.

Leaning forward, her head bent to keep the rain out of her eyes, Margaret stumbled up the path.

Her way really lay over the top of the cliff, but her mother had advised her to follow the longer road inland, and Margaret, realising that the other would be in the teeth of the gale, was glad to take her advice.

After nearly an hour's battling with the weather she arrived at Mother Clarke's tiny cottage, but to her surprise she found that the old woman was not alone, a girl from one of the farms was staying the night to look after her.

"I need hardly have come," thought Margaret when, after a short rest, leaving her basket of delicacies, she started homewards. The thought of shelter and the fireside made her quicken her pace.

"I shall have the wind behind me," she thought, "so I might go back by the cliff,—it is nearly half the distance."

But when she reached the top of the cliff she found that although she had the gale behind her it was all she could do to keep her feet. Struggling blindly forward she did not see the strange procession of men ahead of her till a sudden loud shout made her look up.



What she saw made her stop short in horror.

What she saw made her stop short in horror. What could it mean? Who could be abroad on such a night? No one on good intent!

She peered through the driving rain. The men had with them a cow — but there was something strange about the beast. Its head was tied to its front leg and from its horns hung a lantern—as it walked the lantern swayed up and down.

In a flash Margaret realised what it meant — wreckers! Somewhere off the treacherous rocky coast a vessel was seeking safe anchorage; when the sailors saw that light, thinking it another ship, they would sail inshore to be dashed to pieces on the rocks.

For a moment Margaret stood paralysed with horror,—what could she do? Fetch help? But where —it was miles to the nearest house —it would be too late—the men were approaching. She must not be seen. Hiding her lantern beneath her cloak she stepped hastily behind an old rick which stood by the path. For herself she had no fear, though if the men had seen her she would have been in a desperate position; her one thought was for the ship—how could she save it from its cruel fate?

"She's comin' nearer!" shouted a man.

"Aye—hope's she's a good cargo," laughed another; "the last was not worth our trouble."

Margaret crouched against the hayrick as she tried to think of a plan. It was her fingers coming into contact with the wet hay which gave her the idea—a Fire! It would act like a beacon and warn the sailors, but how——

"Why, the lantern, of course!" she thought.

With cold, wet fingers she pulled handfuls of dry hay from the stack—she must have enough—if the lantern were to blow out!

At last she had a pile of dry hay, and crouching over it, shielding the lantern with her cloak, she opened the door carefully. It was alight!

Feverishly she fed the little flame with wisps of dry hay, but the wind, no longer her enemy, was now her ally, for it fanned the flame so that it shot up, licking all it could reach.

Margaret had to jump away to save her cloak from catching. Already yellow tongues were shooting up to the top of the rick.

A shout warned Margaret that the wreckers had seen the fire. Turning, she fled for her life down the narrow path, there was nothing she could do now.

"If only it has got hold so that they cannot put it out," she thought.

For the first time she fully realised the danger of her position. If the men succeeded in extinguishing the fire and catching her, what hope had she for mercy? Men who would cheerfully wreck a whole shipload of sailors would not care what they did to one girl who had tried to thwart their schemes.

Fear lent her wings, never had Margaret run so fast. Not daring to pause to see whether her plan had succeeded she strained her ears for sounds of pursuit—yes—there it came—the clatter of men's heavy boots on the stones.

Gasping for breath Margaret struggled on, when suddenly, catching her foot against a stone, she tripped, falling heavily to the ground. The suddenness of the fall took away what little breath she had left, so that she lay for a moment panting.

The sounds of pursuit grew louder, and before Margaret had time to rise three men dashed past her as if running for their lives; as they went one glanced anxiously back.

Margaret, very shaken and bruised, sat up.

"Well . . . what . . ." she wondered when her eye caught sight of the red glow on the cliff.

"The fire! It's alight!" she exclaimed.



Gasping for breath, she tripped, falling heavily to the ground.

Then she understood, the men were not pursuing her at all. When they saw the blazing rick they were afraid of being caught and were running for their lives. So taken up were they with their own escape that they had never even seen her lying by the path.

Margaret got up stiffly, rather

dazed by the whole adventure, her legs trembled and she felt sore and bruised.

"I must get home," she thought dully. "If anyone sees me, I shall be put in prison for burning it."

Slowly she made her way home by the long inland path.

"Why, Margaret! What has happened?" exclaimed Dame Katherine when the door opened to admit a wild figure.

Dripping with rain, her hair over her eyes, a cut on her face, with no hat, Margaret was indeed a sorry sight.

"I had a fall," was all the explanation she gave of her condition.

Dame Katherine and Martha fussed over her until she found herself in bed sipping a hot posset. Her head was throbbing so that she thought she should never sleep, but something in the posset soon made her drowsy so that she did not wake until the sun was streaming into her room.

"Oh!" she cried, sitting up in bed and looking out of the window.

Well might she exclaim, for there, riding at anchor in the bay, was a beautiful ship.

Hastily Margaret dressed and ran downstairs.

"Mother!" she cried, "have you seen——" But she broke off, for her mother was not alone.

A man sat beside her with his back to the door; at the sound of Margaret's entrance he turned.

With one wild cry Margaret flung herself into her father's arms.

When the first greetings were over Captain Marston said:

"I am lucky to be here to-day . . . we were nearly dashed to pieces on the rocks last night . . . we were sure another ship lay ahead of us . . . saw her light and were following her, then suddenly a beacon was lit and we saw the rocks . . . a very near shave!"

It was then Margaret's turn to tell of her adventure—she ended by saying:

"But the hayrick, Father, which I burnt; will the owner be angry?"

Her father laughed. "That can soon be put right, little lass," he said. "Never fear, and we will have these fine fellows caught if they try that game again. Little did I think, Margaret, when I saw the beacon, that my own brave daughter was risking her life for us."

What a happy party it was in the house in the bay that day, and though Margaret knew many bad storms after that, never again were wreckers at work on that coast; for whenever the night was wild or rough a beacon was lit on the spot where the rick had stood, and folks seeing it would say:

"There is Mistress Margaret's beacon, a warning to all poor mariners."



The Grievous Fault

By NORAH CAMERON

"The noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault;
And grievously hath Cæsar answered it."

MOYRA PHILLIPS paused in her reading. "But why, Miss Charlton, why 'grievous'?" she asked. "Is ambition really so wrong?" Her voice sounded genuinely worried.

Miss Charlton smiled. "There's nothing wrong about ambition in itself, Moyra," she explained. "It is only when people sacrifice everything and everybody for ambition's sake that it becomes a harmful thing."

Moyra wrinkled her brows. "But surely, if a person wants to get on——" she began.

"My father always tells me that the only secret of success is to let nothing stand in one's path," remarked a pale, dark girl in horn-rimmed spectacles sitting on Moyra's right. Elaine Wallis!

Moyra flashed her a half-shy, half-adoring smile. Elaine's father, the famous novelist, was Moyra's idol. To have Carlton Wallis's daughter not only at the same school but actually sitting next to her in the Fifth Form was to Moyra, who cherished literary ambitions, sheer bliss. Little Mary Lawson, until Elaine's advent Moyra's chief friend and confidante, saw the smile and sighed ruefully. If ambition changed people as much as it had changed Moyra, she couldn't believe it was really a good thing.

"And what do you think, Mary?" Mary started guiltily at the mistress's question.

"I—I think that lots of things are more important than being successful——" she began shyly.

"Yes, quite right," said Miss

Charlton encouragingly, but at that moment the bell for Break rang.

"As it always does when we're discussing anything interesting," grumbled Elaine, slipping her arm through Moyra's and marching her off into the garden. Mary looked after them wistfully. Moyra and she had been best friends ever since they were in the Lower Third and had gone up the school together. But the arrival of Elaine Wallis at the beginning of this Summer Term had spoilt all that. Of course, Moyra was frightfully clever—she had headed the Junior Cambridge lists with three distinctions—so it was only natural that she should have been attracted by the brilliant Elaine. Besides, Moyra had always longed to write. "I expect Elaine's father could introduce her to all sorts of Editors and people," thought Mary vaguely. But that didn't make Moyra's desertion any easier to bear. "I hope it's not mean of me to be glad that Elaine's *the* complete rabbit at swimming and games; Moyra and I will still have those together. If we practise furiously we're sure to be in the Form Tennis Six and we might squeeze into the School Second Team with any luck." And comforted by this idea, Mary ran gaily out to join a group practising at the nets.

But when the Games Lists to be filled in by those Fifth Formers who wished to be tested for places in the Cricket, Tennis and Swimming Teams went up, every sport-loving name except Moyra's was scribbled down within the first ten minutes. Petronella Spears, the Fifth Games Captain, regarded the notice-board with a puzzled frown at Break next morning. "Why, Moyra, your name's not down yet," she exclaimed. "You'd better buck up. I've got to take the lists to Miss Baxter this afternoon."

"Oh, I'm crying off this trip," replied Moyra, flushing for all her airy tone. "Too much work on hand. I'm entering for the Proctor Essay Prize, you know, besides taking Senior at Christmas."

"At Christmas! But, Moyra, none of us are taking Senior till next summer," said Mary anxiously.

"I am," Elaine remarked.

Petronella glanced at her complacent spectacled face. "I see," she said meaningly.

"Well, I want to go up into the Sixth in the New Year. Four terms in this dog's island is enough for anyone I should hope," cried Moyra impatiently.

"But, Moyra," Mary's voice was troubled, "you promised, don't you remember, to partner me at tennis this term and try for the Sixes and the Senior Cup."

"I tell you, I can't spare the time. It's far more important for me to get my remove in January so I can

start working for Matric. at once," Moyra insisted.

The form, with the exception of Mary, who was near tears, and Elaine, who looked slightly contemptuous of the whole argument, stared.

"You must be mad," Petronella cried. "Giving up games for all this swotting. Whoever wants to be in the Sixth for another year at least?"

"That's Moyra's business," Elaine remarked coldly. "If she shares my ambition to prepare for her University career as soon as possible instead of slacking around in the Fifth for another three terms——"

"But you're older," Petronella pointed out. "You were half-way through the Senior syllabus before you came here. It's absurd for Moyra to attempt——"

"Really, Peter Spears, I wish you'd mind your own business," chimed in Moyra irritably. "As it happens, I've been to the Head and she quite approves, so there!"

"There are other things besides games, you know," Elaine drawled.

"By one who couldn't play a game to save her life," cried Petronella scornfully.

"And wouldn't, if she could," Elaine retorted. "Come on, Moyra, let's go to the Library. Anything to escape this terrible, hearty sporting atmosphere. When either you or I have wrested the Proctor Prize from under the noses of the Sixth they'll be sorry they spoke."

"Not on your life. So long as they snaffle the Tennis and Swimming Cups they won't bat an eyelid even if we win the—the Nobel Prize for Literature," declared Moyra as the classroom door banged behind the two friends.

"Well," exclaimed Petronella stormily, "of all the——"

"Don't you worry, Peter," Phyllis Denham, the form Vice-Captain advised her. "Luckily we've got a pretty good games set in the Fifth this year without Miss Swelled-Head Phillips."

"And, Mary," Petronella added, "now that Moyra's dropped out I'd awfully like you to try playing with me as Fifth First Couple."

"Oh, thanks awfully, Peter. I'd love to, of course," Mary replied, but all the pleasure and pride she would normally have taken in such an offer was damped. She would so much rather have played form third couple with Moyra than in the School Six itself with anyone else.

But Moyra was far too busy making up the necessary leeway in her Cambridge syllabus to worry about Mary's feelings. Elaine had drawn such glitteringly attractive pictures of College life and of the brilliant literary careers that would be sure to follow for them both that every other prospect paled. Moyra was clever, and only her absorption in

sports had previously prevented her from proving herself brilliant. Now that she was giving her whole mind to her work, she bade fair not only to rival Elaine but even to outstrip her.

The two were working together in the study they shared one evening when Freda Holmes, Head Girl and the school's most distinguished scholar, popped her head in. "Busy, you two?" she enquired. "Because I rather wanted to speak to Elaine—if you'd come along to my den."

Elaine rose eagerly and followed the Sixth Former. It was supper-time before she reappeared. "Freda is very interested in my literary work," she told the rather disgruntled Moyra. "She wants me to write something for the School Magazine and also to assist her with the Pageant Play she is writing for Sports Day."

"But, Elaine, you'll never have time," Moyra protested.

"Heaps," returned her friend easily. "I'm well ahead with my Senior work, and if I study instead of reading in the afternoons when you're having extra coaching, I can easily help Freda from six to seven each evening."

"But that cuts into our study time together."

"Can't be helped."

"And what about the Proctor Essay? There's only another fortnight before they go in, you know."

"Oh, that." Elaine shrugged her shoulders. "Child's play," she said contemptuously.

But Moyra was finding her own essay far from child's play. Apart from the fact that each competitor had to select her own subject and submit it for the Head's approval before starting work, there was no supervision of the Proctor Essays, the only regulations being to limit the length to between 800 and 1,000 words and that all manuscripts must be delivered to the Head Mistress before noon on the appointed day.

Moyra was writing upon "The Privileges and Responsibilities of Friendship," a subject about which she felt that her meeting with Elaine had taught her a good deal. But lately, Elaine had been so pre-occupied—distressingly unlike the Perfect Friend Moyra had idealised in her essay. The Sixth, ... by Freda's example, had "tak... up" the celebrated novelist's daughter and Elaine, flattered ... their notice, was for ever mak... excuses to visit Freda's study or ... join the older girls in the garden ... Break and dinner-hour.

Moyra, deprived of the stimul... of her new friend's companionship and co-operation in the heavy ext... work she had undertaken at Elaine's suggestion in the first place, f... more than a little ill-used.

"I thought you said how jo... it would be our having this stu...

together," she complained on one of Elaine's rare appearances. "And now you're never here. I do think——"

"My dear Moyra, you surely realise what an advantage it is for me to be so well in with Freda Holmes. You know she is going to Westville College next year and when I—we—go there as Freshers, she will be a Second Year Student and enormously useful to us. Can't you see——"

"I see that you prefer Freda's company to mine."

"Of course, if you are going to indulge in silly jealousy," Elaine began scornfully.

"I'm not, Elly. Only I never see you nowadays. I didn't mind all this extra swot when we were working together, but it's pretty bleak slogging away alone all the time. Anyhow, my Proctor Essay's finished, thank goodness," and Moyra smoothed the neatly written sheets lovingly.

A gleam of interest dawned in Elaine's face. "May I see?" she asked.

"Rather." Moyra passed the essay over and scanned her friend's expression anxiously as Elaine read it through and returned it to her without a word.

"Well?" Moyra demanded at last.

"Oh, quite good. Perhaps a bit sentimental, but it stands a strong chance I should say." Elaine's tone was disappointingly flat and unenthusiastic.

Moyra sighed. After all her hard work, that was all Elaine could find to say! She could only suppose that her essay must be pretty rotten. "Oh, well, I did my best," she said as lightly as she could. "I'll probably revise parts of it before I give it in. Friday, isn't it, and to-day's Wednesday."

"Yes, and mine's not finished yet," Elaine frowned.

"Oh, bad luck," said Moyra sympathetically. But Elaine's frown was caused less by anxiety than by sheer envy. Trusting to her easy brilliance to see her through, she had scamped her essay and was now faced with the unpalatable fact that Moyra's work was far superior to her own. However, she completed the rough draft of her essay that evening and was so much more amiable and like her old self that Moyra felt cheered.

On Friday morning, Moyra rushed into the joint study where Elaine was already collecting her books for school. "Elly," she cried breathlessly, "be an angel and take my essay over to School House, will you? I had awful toothache all night, and Matron's taking me off to the dentist at once. I may not be back before twelve—anyhow, I daren't risk it. Not that I've any chance of the prize, of course."

"Oh, sorry! Where is it? In your desk? Right. I'd have the tooth out and get it over if I were you."

The School House at Greystoke was used only for classes and other working-hours' activities. Staff and Head Mistress lived in the School House building, but the girls slept and studied in four independent houses standing in their own grounds at distances varying from a quarter to half a mile from the main building. Ross House, to which Moyra, Elaine, Mary and various other Fifth Formers belonged, was a good ten minutes' walk from School and Elaine, having waved her stricken friend off the premises, prepared to set off at once, intending to hand in the precious essays before morning school began.



Moyra rushed into the joint study.

As she opened Moyra's desk drawer and drew out the neatly written sheets clipped carefully together in the left-hand corner, something fluttered to the floor. Elaine stooped down. It was a page of Moyra's essay that had somehow become detached from the rest.

"Page 4," murmured Elaine to herself reflectively. She straightened her back, hesitated, then set her lips. "After all," she told herself, "it's hardly my fault if leaves out a page of her essay, is it?

"Mary Lawson, you appear to be suffering from a cold."

"Yes, Biss Delson," said Mary meekly.

Miss Nelson, Science Mistress and anti-germ fanatic, was annoyed. "Then why did you come to school this morning? Disseminating infection! Kindly return to your house at once and consult Matron."

Mary sneezed and left the classroom.

Quarter of an hour later, she was knocking at the door of the Ross House Matron's room. Receiving no reply, she knocked again and then again before she remembered that Matron had gone with Moyra to the dentist's.

"She ought to be back any time now," Mary thought, pressing a hot hand to her aching head. "Wish she'd buck up 'cos I do feel muzzy and rotten. I'd give anything for one of those marvellous pink cinnamon tablets Moyra used to keep in her desk. Dare I pinch one—she'll never know," and Mary dragged wearily along to the door of the study now occupied by Moyra and Elaine.

She found the lozenges in a tin on the mantelpiece and took one thankfully. "Queer how you seem to feel better the minute you take these things," she thought, turning to the door. Then her quick eye glimpsed a sheet of paper lying underneath Moyra's desk. Automatically, tidy Mary picked it up to replace it. Suddenly she caught her breath. It was so obviously a page of Moyra's Proctor Essay! "But surely the essays went in this morning. Moyra must have got hers out in a hurry for Elaine to take over and never noticed she'd slipped this page."

Mary glanced feverishly at her wrist-watch. "Ten to twelve. Surely if I got there before noon and explained to the Head about Moyra's toothache and her having to rush off with Matron it would be all right," thought Mary confusedly. "But I can't do it unless——"

The next moment she was running down the stairs, along the deserted passage, across the garden to the forbidden bicycle shed. Mercifully the gardener had left it open that morning. Snatching the machine nearest the door, Mary trundled it out of the back gate, and in three seconds she was pedalling madly down the steep road towards School. "I'll leave the bike outside and trust to luck no one sees it," she muttered. "If only I get there in time. Oh dear, my head does feel so queer! And the hairpin bend's round this next corner . . . Christmas! These brakes——"

* * *

Mary came to herself in the Ross House San., with Matron and a doctor bending over her. Her head throbbed and ached agonis-

ingly. What had happened she had no idea. Then she remembered. "Did I get there in time?" she asked weakly. Matron and doctor glanced meaningly at one another.

Phillips won the Essay Prize and if you go to sleep now like a good girl, she will be able to come and see you quite soon. She knows you've been asking for her."



"Oh dear, my head does fe [illegible]"

"Yes, dear, of course," said Matron soothingly, "and now try to sleep a little."

"But Moyra—the Proctor Essay. Did she win it?" the weak voice persisted.

Matron's face cleared. "So that's it!" she murmured. "Yes, Moyra

"[illegible] drow[illegible] sigh [illegible]

But it was not until some days later that Moyra was allowed to visit the patient. "You've had slight concussion, you know, falling off that bike at the hairpin bend,"

she explained in reply to Mary's questions. "Matron can't imagine how you got there, but she thinks you must have been a bit light-headed with your cold and not realised——"

"Then I didn't get to School House in time?" Mary interrupted.

"In time for what?"

"Your essay. The missing page. *I was taking it to the Head.*" And encouraged by Moyra's puzzled face, Mary blurted out the whole story.

"But my dear old brick," said Moyra shakily when she had finished, "that was only a page I'd re-copied the night before. It must have got slipped in with the Essay by mistake and when Elaine took it out of the drawer, I suppose the loose leaf fell under the desk——"

"Elaine took them out, did she?" said Mary thoughtfully.

"Yes. I was in a tearing hurry and [illegible], you don't [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]?"

[illegible] sturdily. "I never liked [illegible], but I don't believe she'd deliberately cheat."

"She wasn't a bit nice about my winning the Proctor Prize." Moyra's lip quivered. "And what do you think? She's got her father to write to the Head and ask for her to be moved up into the Sixth next term so that she can be with her beloved Freda."

"But I thought you and she were taking Senior at Christmas."

"Well, we're not," said Moyra with decision. "Whether Elaine goes up or stays in the *Fifth*, I'm through. And, Mary—I'm playing First Couple with Peter till you're better and then Peter's to play with Phyl, and you and I will be Second Couple—unless you'd rather stay First as Peter arranged. She says it's up to you."

"You know I'd rather play reserve with you than first with any-one else," cried Mary warmly.

"You aren't a scrap ambitious for yourself, are you?" Moyra sighed.

"Well," said Mary thoughtfully, "I think I am—about one thing, at least."

"Tell me."

"Being a good friend," Mary admitted shyly.

Moyra hugged her impulsively. "Even Miss Charlton couldn't call that a 'grievous fault'," she declared.

The Silver Penny

BY KATHERINE L. OLDMEADOW

ONE stormy April evening in the year 1646, when England lay under the shadow of Civil War with the country split into two factions, one for Charles I. and the Kingdom and the other for Cromwell and the Parliament, a young girl of about fourteen sat alone in an upper room in an English manor-house tearing old linen into strips. She wore the *stiff, quaint dress of the Stuart* period, but her silk frock was shabby and faded and the deep lace collar at her neck was mended and worn.

The room was panelled, and over the great, carved fireplace there hung the portrait of a smiling little boy and girl playing with a spaniel, painted by the famous Sir Peter Lely in the days before the Civil War had impoverished the family.

The worker kept glancing out of the window anxiously. Oh, why didn't Charles *come?* He left the parsonage where he went daily to his lessons at the hour of six, and now it was near seven and the storm growing worse every moment.

There was a strange feeling in the house, too; it was so silent and so dark. The little girl shivered, and for a moment buried her cold fingers in her wide sleeves for warmth, and then suddenly, she jumped up joyfully.

A boy in a shabby satin suit was running up the drive. The plumes of his black, cavalier hat were all wet and bedraggled. Charles, at last, but, oh, dear! He was cov-ere [illegible] white linen ha [illegible]

[illegible] in [illegible] ru [illegible] the [illegible] an [illegible] the [illegible] an [illegible] eg [illegible]

"Charles!"

"Henrietta!"

"You've been fighting—oh, Charles!"

"I've been fighting—oh, Henrietta!" mocked Charles, throwing down his satchel, and then he burst out with, "Yea, verily—as our

Roundhead friends would say—I've had a battle. But who cares for a broken nose when one hath fought for King Charles!"

"Hush! Oh, Charles, everything has seemed so sad to-day—and I do wish you had not stayed to fight and spoil your clothes."

"Not fight! When that oaf of a Roundhead, Tom Andrews, dares to call my uncle, myself and you, too, my sister, traitors, and yet speaks treacherously himself! Listen, Henrietta—there is ill news."

"Oh, Charles—not another defeat?"

"Nay, but they are saying in the village that the King hath left the army and hath escaped to France, and Parliament means to find him and kill him and all the royal family. Tom, the traitor, boasted that the War is over and Cromwell will rule over England, and all those who have fought for the King's cause will be turned out out of their homes to go a-begging or be hanged as traitors. I gave him a black eye for that and our brave Roundhead went home blubbering."

"The King left the army! Oh, Charles, do you think it can be true?" Henrietta turned pale.

"I know not. All I know is that never again will Tom Andrews call the King traitor while I have two fists. But, faith! I've brought home something beside a broken nose. I've a gift for my uncle."

"Who gave it to you?"

"I met an old pedlar outside the gates, the queerest old fellow—and he said, 'Stay, my young lord. Which of ye in that fair mansion suffers sorely from the camps?' I said, 'My uncle is crippled with it, master,' and straightway he pestered me to buy his nostrum for all ills that stiffen the joints."

"But you had no money."

"Not I—and so I said, and seeing it was the truth, he said, 'Well then, take it to the master of the house as a gift—he'll find it such good medicine that I warrant he'll pay me a golden guinea for it when next I call. But look ye—handling destroys its magic, so run you and place the ointment straight into the master's hands like a brave boy!' Here it is."

Charles held up a square packet sealed with a strange cypher and both children gazed at it with awe; for in 1646 people believed firmly in black magic, quack doctors and their miraculous medicines.

"Nay—do not touch it, Henrietta—I must hasten to give it to my uncle."

"No, wait, Charles—you must ——" But Charles was away, dashing along the gallery, leaping down the wide, carved staircase to knock on the door of the library.

"Come in."

An old man sat reading in a high-backed chair drawn close to a small, charcoal fire.

" Sir, I met a pedlar at the gates and he pestered me to buy his nostrum to cure the stiffness. When I told him I had no money he bade me take it as a gift and put it straight into your hands—sir ! "

only
excep "

the boy went to Henrietta to have his wounds dressed, and to give her the news that the pedlar's magic medicine had already worked wonders with their uncle's ailments.

Feeling the lump on his head with pride, Charles munched away at the



" Take it to the master of the house as a gift."

For the old man had risen and had seized the packet, his eyes bright with excitement as he examined the cypher.

" Good lad—go now, hasten and tell Jasper to come to me immediately."

Wondering, Charles ran to fetch the old serving-man, who was the

hunk of bread his sister had brought him and said, " Faith, Henrietta, I wish I were a few years older and could serve the King more heartily," and then the two children paused to listen to angry voices in the distance, Molly, the cook-maid, and the faithful Jasper protesting loudly.

" I'll go home to my mother."

"Ay—and see ye tarry with her this time, wench!"

"To call an honest maid 'thief!'"

"I did but ask ye for the new candles."

"And did ye not ask me who'd been eating 'em? Fie on ye! I'll go home."

Molly's heavy footsteps were heard clattering up the attic stairs, and Henrietta hastened away to Jasper.

"Jasper—what ails Molly?"

"Tantrums! Let her go, mistress. Serving-wenches beant the same as they be in my young days. In these bad times they ax twelve shilling a year, if ye please, and if there's a word said to 'em they go running off to their mothers. But look ye here, young mistress—don't 'ee mind Moll—her'll be begging to come back afore many days; but to-night the old master wants her out of the way. Hist now—hold thy tongue!"

He motioned Henrietta to withdraw as Molly, cloaked and carrying a bundle, came down the wooden stairs to make an angry departure, old Jasper hobbling after her to bar the big gates.

It was now quite dark. The wind was howling down the wide chimneys and rain rattled against the window-panes.

Jasper returned, and after shooting the bolts of the big front door into their sockets, he called, "Young master and young mistress, come ye down and see the master, both of ye." And when they hastened to obey, he led them to the library muttering, "I be as old as church clock and I keeps to time as regular, and never did I see such happenings! The master's got a word for 'ee and mind ye don't breathe aught of it beyond these four walls—and you, Master Charles, ye must play the man of the house this night for, alack, the cramps is on me cruel, and the old master's not much usefuller!"

He opened the library door and the children saw that logs had been thrown upon the fire and Mr. James Creede, their uncle, no longer sat brooding in his chair, but was busily engaged scanning a map spread over the table where candles burnt extravagantly.

They stood waiting, and turning round he said: "Listen, children—to-night we are expecting a guest."

"Yes, Uncle."

"Charles, the gates are closed and barred and the postern must be locked, too. Go you and see to it and then stand on guard."

"Yes, sir."

"Do not open however noisy the summons until you hear the signal—*seven* knocks on the postern gate."

"No, sir."

"And you, Henrietta, must be our good housewife. Go to the kitchens and see there is a nourishing meal prepared for the traveller, and air and make ready the great bedchamber."

"Yes, Uncle."

The children left the room wondering; for guests never came to Creede in these sad days. Henrietta had housewifely qualms, too, about the empty larder, as she pulled aside the heavy curtains at the window and looked anxiously out into the night.

"Charles, it's raining fast—you must wrap yourself in your riding-cloak."

"Nay, I'm not made of sugar."

"I wish you were, then I could use part of you to sweeten the guest's posset! We are sadly in need of luxuries."

Henrietta fetched her brother's cloak and, after coaxing him to wear it, she let him out into the stormy night with pity in her heart.

He was thirteen; but to her he looked such a little boy as he ran down the drive to act as watchman at the gates; for Henrietta at fourteen, with all the cares of the household upon her young shoulders, felt immensely old and wise.

Daughters of the house in the seventeenth century were accomplished in the art of good housekeeping, and Henrietta wore her dead mother's chatelaine with all its jingling keys round her waist and knew the virtues of all the herbs she grew and dried. She made her own cordials and preserves and doctored the household with her simples when they needed it.

Country hospitality demanded th very best in the house to offer to guest, and Henrietta flew down t the dark, cold kitchen, where a di lamp flickered and dead ashes la upon the hearth. Tying an apro of beautiful point lace over her gow she took up the lantern and went t explore the buttery. It containe nothing but a haunch of cold mut ton, the skeleton of a fowl, a piec of cheese, some salt butter in barrel, a loaf of barley bread and crock of milk. Not very good chee for a traveller on a wet, stormy nigh and Henrietta regarded it ruefully

Then, seizing the bellows she ble life into the dying embers on th hearth, and although terrified of th rats that scampered in the darknes she journeyed to the cellars to dra ale from the casks. This she poure into a pan with butter and spices an set over the fire before putting th chicken-bones with bread to boil fo a savoury pottage flavoured wit dried herbs. While her cooking pots simmered she took a candl and went to set the best bedchambe in order. To her surprise she found that Jasper had arrived before he and a great fire of ash-logs, the mos precious of their woods, leapt on th hearth.

"Jasper!" she cried. "Yo scold Molly for wasting, and y you build a bonfire of the best as wood!"

"Ay, young mistress, bonfire's

good word, and soon I reckon we'll see 'em on every hilltop blazing for the King's victory—and don't 'ee scold. Would 'ee stint a guest to Creede ? "

" Nay." Henrietta sighed. " But bad times have made me thrifty, Jasper. But 'tis a brave blaze."

She spread out her fingers to the fire and sighed, thinking of Charles out in the storm watching the postern-gate.

An immense four-post bed, heavily carved with the Creede coat of arms and hung with tapestry occupied the centre of the room, and tables, chairs, presses and stools stood stiffly round the walls. Henrietta drew the heavy curtains and then, with Jasper's help, dragged the feather beds and pillows to the blaze. Then from the press, she took fine linen and set it to air while she rubbed the furniture, polished the mirrors and spread a lace towel upon the dressing-chest.

Then she flew down to the dining-room and again found flames leaping upon the hearth. Upon the dark, panelled walls hung family portraits; Creedes in armour, ruffs and farthingales, their long, pale faces gazing flatly from their frames with ghostly smiles. Round the oaken table were ranged stately chairs, and along the wall stood a massive sideboard so loaded with silver that it looked like a silversmith's shop.

In the reign of Charles I there were no banks in England, and fine silver was often the most valuable family asset, representing a fortune not in coins to be hidden away in a treasure-chest, but in money turned into something beautiful and visible that could be used daily and enjoyed. Solid, yet of exquisite workmanship, great silver dishes, basins, tankards, beakers, cups, ewers and candlesticks stood on the sideboard, a relic of happier days, tarnished with neglect but still gleaming here and there in the candlelight.

Henrietta looked at it with dismay, for guests should be served on shining silver, not on dishes as dull as pewter; yet who was to clean it ?

She flung an embroidered cloth over the table just as Jasper came hobbling in with a bowlful of ashes and a pile of old rags. Groaning with stiffness he put them down on the floor and began to collect the silver.

" Oh, Jasper—are you going to clean it ? "

" Ay—beant there guests coming to Creede ? "

" But it's so dirty and I have no time to help you."

" Go your ways, mistress, when I've finished with yon dishes they won't be ashamed to look the moon in the face."

Henrietta slipped back to her cooking-pots, almost happy in the unusual commotion; the brightness and warmth had brought the feeling

of festivity to the house that all young people love.

She stirred her pottage and skimmed the ale, and then, taking her candle again and braving the ghosts in the attics, went away to bring down the finest of the last winter apples.

These she heaped on a silver dish in the centre of the dining-table, and as Jasper added to his shining pile she set rosemary-scented home-made candles in silver sconces round it, and placed beakers, platters and spoons upon the board.

Then she brought her last honey-comb, and turned out on a dish a pot of preserve made from wild apples and rose-berries as red as rubies and as clear as crystal.

Meanwhile, in the stormy darkness outside, Charles stood on guard near the postern, whistling under his breath to keep up his spirits; for although he was ready to fight for the King and boasted that he feared no living Roundhead, he firmly believed in the superstitions of the times and was convinced that the voices of the wild wind were the shrieks of wandering witches who might take it into their heads to fly over him at any moment and cast upon him the Evil Eye.

As the hours passed he had to pinch himself to keep awake, straining his ears every moment to catch the expected summons above the howling of the wind.

The last stroke of the church clock striking twelve had scarcely died away when there was a knock on the postern-gate.

Seven times it struck and Charles opened the gate softly and admitted three gentlemen, all afoot, wrapped in dark, military cloaks. Without a word he led them through the darkness to the house and knocked softly.

The door flew open, and to the boy's astonishment he saw his uncle, who seldom left his chair, standing [illegible] upon the [illegible] stood shy [illegible] Jasper, in his best coat, held [illegible] two lighted candles.

Their light shone upon the travellers, and Charles noticed that one of them was short and walked with a slight limp. He had a little, pointed beard and kind, sad eyes.

To the children's amazement their uncle dropped on his knees before the little man and fervently kissed his hand, and as he did so Charles stared at Henrietta and with one accord their hearts began to beat faster, in astonishment and joy, for they knew now that the guest they had worked for and waited for so many weary hours was King Charles of England.

Beckoning to them their uncle said, "My young kinsfolk, Sire, and loyal to the core," and the children knelt before the King who laid a hand on each of their heads gently,



Uncle dropped on his knees and fervently kissed his hand.

saying with a smile, "And what are the names of these loyal subjects?"

"The lad is named for you, Sire; and the maid for our most gracious queen."

Hearing this the King embraced them both tenderly and then passed with his gentlemen into the library, leaving the children trembling with excitement.

"Henrietta, I have served the King! What think you of that?" Charles threw his wet cap up in the air.

"And have not I also served him —and Jasper, too? Oh, Jasper— now I know why the best ash-wood must be used!"

Henrietta with sparkling eyes sang the old jingle under her breath:

"Oaken logs of dry and old
Keep away the winter cold.
But ash-wood wet, or ash-wood dry
A King shall warm his slippers by!"

Jasper, all smiles, raised his finger warningly. "Hist, both of 'ee—is the King's Majesty to be deafened when he comes to Creede? I be going on guard."

He took up his position at the great, barred door, his stiff old limbs held erect like a sentinel.

"And you, Charles, must change into your velvet suit and be the King's page." Henrietta flew away to the kitchen, and for once Charles made no demur about changing his clothes.

The table in the dining-hall gleaming with old silver and lit by sweetl scented candles pleased Henrietta's anxious eyes, and when the guest were summoned the King woul have no formality, saying, "To-nigh we are all friends supping Ashburnham, attend to Mistres Henrietta, and you, Dr. Hudso help our good host to carve th excellent haunch."

He praised Henrietta's pottag but ate sparingly, asking the childre if they knew the way to be happ and healthy.

"Nay, Sire."

"Pick no quarrels, and make long meals."

He smiled, but his eyes were unutterably sad that Henrietta co have wept, and ached to serve hi

When the gentlemen returned the library to pore over maps a speak in hushed tones, Jasper, s at his post, whispered, "Better to your beds, young mistress and master."

"Not I!" cried Charle "Would you have me snoring whe Kings visit Creede? Go to bed yourself, my good Jasper."

As for Henrietta, she had no ti to think of bed. She must mend th fire in the bed-chamber, smooth th bed linen and set upon a stool a large silver basin containing a round lump of wax from her beehives to light the chamber with soft radian for the King.

But it was almost daylight wh

the royal guest at last retired with his gentlemen attending him. But even then there was no rest for Henrietta and Charles, for their uncle came and beckoned to them to follow him to the dining-hall.

The fire had died away, and the narrow, pale faces of their ancestors gazed down as if they too were in family council as the master of the house put down his candle among the gleaming silver.

"Listen, children—you love the King and England?"

"Most dearly, sir."

"Hast enough love for them to give them all you possess?"

"But, sir, we possess nothing," said Charles sadly, and Henrietta looked down at her worn dress.

"Nay, lad, *not now, but when I* go this house, the land we have left and all our possessions belong to you and Henrietta. We are poor now, but the King is poorer and the Queen hath not a change of garment. The King hath no money to pay his armies, although the Crown jewels have been sold for that purpose. Without money the war cannot go on, and money must be found. The King hath left his army to seek it, and many loyal gentlemen have already given all they possess."

"But, Uncle, what can *we* give him?"

"That silver—it can be melted down at a private mint and made into silver coinage to pay the King's men."

"Faith, sir—if we can't fight ourselves surely we can help other men to do it," cried Charles. "What say you, Henrietta? Will you give your share?"

"That I will," said Henrietta with shining eyes, and the two children, who had already lost a father at Edgehill and a mother of a broken heart, began to pile up their silver heritage.

When the King rose his host led him to the dining-hall and, showing him the glittering heap, explained that it was an offering from Henrietta and Charles.

Much moved, the King again tenderly embraced the children, saying, "I thank God I can still forgive those who have deprived me of all *I love best, when I find I have such* good and loyal friends left to me."

At nightfall he left the house; but the silver remained, the family regarding it ruefully; for to give a treasure to the King was one thing, but to convey it to the royal mint safely was quite a different matter.

"If it could be carried to Lady Carrel, all would be well," said Mr. Creede. "She hath still horses and could convey it secretly to town."

"Then, Uncle, I have an idea," cried Henrietta. "Lady Carrel sent me a letter by Roger, the miller, asking for old linen for the wounded lodged at her house. Roger is loyal and he carries flour often to the castle. He will not refuse to help the King

by hiding the silver in his flour sacks."

"And I will go as Roger's guard," said Charles. "Faith, Henrietta, 'tis an excellent plan! Yea, verily, as our Puritan friends say! For a woman your brains are singularly quick."

"Nay, lad, a guard would cause suspicion. Let Henrietta travel to the castle with the linen and see that the silver is safely delivered."

This was disappointing to Charles; but with seventeenth-century obedience he submitted with a good grace and enjoyed helping Jasper and his sister carry their treasures to the courtyard under the cover of night, and taking a secret message to Roger asking his help.

Henrietta rolled the silver pieces in strips of linen, and when Roger's wagon came creaking into the yard all was in readiness, and Henrietta herself, with a handkerchief tied over her curls, and wearing her plainest dress, took her place beside Roger. The wagon, with its floury load, looked harmless enough, and yet Henrietta quaked with fear; for Roger was a jolly fellow and would continually break out into some rousing Cavalier song.

"Nay, Roger, be silent — who knows what Roundhead ear lurks behind the hedge?"

"Ay, mistress, we mun pull a long face, I warrant, for Merrie England's got the doleful dumps. [illegible] meeting all the livelong day, and, faith, if we as much as grin at a joke we'll be hanged for it."

"Alack, 'tis very sad!" sighed Henrietta. "But, Roger—if th King's armies win—" she patted knobbly sack joyfully—"all will b well, and we can dance on the gre as much as we like."

They reached the castle in safet in spite of one adventure, when Roundhead soldier, marching to r join his regiment, begged a lift an complained that the sacks he s upon were full of lumps, and sug flour should be used as ammunitic to fire at the enemy!

The silver was left in Lady Carrel care and Henrietta came home aga to eat cheerfully off wooden platte

Some months later the same c pedlar that had brought the King message arrived at the manor-hou just before nightfall and demand to see the master. Jasper led hi to the panelled room where t family sat reading and working.

When he saw the visitor Creede sprang up.

"Major Boswell—what news?"

"Ill, my friend—the King is captive at Holmby, but before was taken I had a word with h

and he bade me carry this token to these young people with his tenderest regards."

The major took from his pocket a round, silver penny stamped roughly with a picture of Creede Manor. It was all that was left of the family silver and, to the children, more precious, because it was a royal gift and a token that the King remembered their services.

Charles took the little coin into his hands and turned it over, examining it; and suddenly it dropped from his fingers, went rolling over the polished boards and then vanished in the gathering dusk and was lost. The children searched for it for days and weeks, but never found it, and at last they sadly gave up the search and, in the troublous years that followed, almost forgot that Charles I had ever sent them a silver penny.

* * *

On Christmas Eve nearly three hundred years later, a little girl sat near the window of the old panelled room at Creede Manor, busily sewing at a surprise Christmas present. Over the great mantelpiece, garlanded with holly, hung a picture of a little girl and boy in Stuart dress inscribed: *Henrietta and Charles Creede*, 1641. A fire of ash-wood blazed on the wide hearth, and before it lounged a



The sacks he sat upon were full of lumps.

schoolboy reading an adventure story.

The little girl's thimble flew off and rolled away down a deep crack in the wainscot.

"Charles, do be an angel and fish for my thimble."

"No, thanks, I don't like fishing."

"Wretch!" Henrietta took a knitting-needle and got up to poke. The thimble came up covered with dust, and peering down the hole the searcher saw a faint gleam.

"I believe there's something else down there besides dirt and mice. Yes—here's an old coin!"

"The family treasure most likely! Let's have a look."

Charles left his book, and the two children examined the queer little irregularly shaped coin.

"Why—it's got a picture of our house on it!" Henrietta went pink with excitement.

The door opened and an old gentleman came into the room.

"Uncle Henry, you're the very person we want—Henrietta's found a rummy old coin behind the wainscot and we can't tell the reign it was made in because it isn't stamped with a King's head. It's got a picture of our house on it instead."

"Let's have a look." The old gentleman sat down by the fire and took the coin and examined it carefully. Then his eyes gleamed.

"Well, Henrietta, my dear, you have found a treasure!"

"But what is it?"

"An old siege piece."

"What on earth's that?"

"You ought to know—what do we pay the school-teachers for? Now listen, and I'll tell you. In the reign of Charles I in the Civil War, the King was desperately in need of money for the army. Before he was captured by Parliament he used to visit the houses of loyal friends, and often they gave him all they possessed—even the family silver to melt down and mint into coinage to pay the troops. These coins were often stamped roughly with a picture of the house or castle that gave the silver and they were called 'siege pieces.'"

"Is that where our family silver went?"

"I suppose it was—anyway, siege pieces are very rare now and this one ought to go into a collection or a museum."

"Well, it shan't!" cried Henrietta. "It's a Christmas present to me from my favourite King—Charles I!"

And when the others had gone she sat thoughtfully before the fire alone tenderly polishing up the little coin. Then, before leaving the room, she kissed her hand to the children in the portrait and whispered, "I wonder if you knew anything about this, my dears?"

What a pity they could not tell her the story!

A VISIT TO STUDLEY COLLEGE

JUST about a hundred years ago a Warwickshire squire, Sir Francis Goodricke, inherited a considerable fortune which he spent in building Studley Castle, the successor of an old Tudor manor-house, which in its turn had replaced the Studley Castle of mediæval days. Round it he laid out a fine estate of 3,000 acres. Thirty years later the land and building passed into other hands, and finally only the castle and just over 300 acres remained, the farms having been sold separately.

In 1903 Frances, Countess of Warwick, who had founded a Hostel for Women Students at Reading some years earlier, bought Studley Castle and its gardens, grounds and farm land, and there established a college for training educated girls in what she termed " the lighter branches of agriculture." A few years later, when Lady Warwick relinquished her control, the training centre became known as " Studley College," the name it still bears.

The old grey building, with its big central tower and fine public rooms, has been adapted to house nearly 70 students as well as several members of staff. Laboratories and classrooms have been provided, and near by there is a large dairy block, where hard and soft cheeses in great variety are made, as well as butter, clotted cream, and even ices.

Next comes a well-equipped poultry department, in which chickens may be found all the year round as well as ducks, turkeys and geese. Incubators are especially busy during the early Spring, but the old-fashioned hen with her family is also to be seen. Goslings are provided with hens as foster-mothers, too. Students mix all the food and take their share of responsibility for everything that is done.

The farm buildings have been modernised, and here are to be seen students feeding calves of all sizes which, later, keep up the numbers of the dairy Shorthorn herd. This herd is tuberculin-tested, and excellent reports on the cleanliness of the milk have been received. Some of the milk is used in the College, the rest being converted by the dairy students into butter and cheese.

The pigs are mostly Large Whites, though some Wessex Saddlebacks are kept for crossing, and, when big enough, they are sold as baconers under contract. All the litters run

outside in turn, and the little pigs are very lively, playing just as merrily as a batch of puppies. Some of them have won prizes at shows, and so have the calves, too.

The busiest time for the shepherd is in March, when the lambs arrive —over 100 of them. Many are twins, and there are a few triplets, too. Sometimes there are lambs to be reared by hand and fed regularly with a bottle, and these always become very tame. Some of them are born in the fields, although those that arrive during the night are usually given shelter for a few hours. Cold weather, if it is dry, does not harm them.

Horses are still used for farm work, and there is generally a foal in spring, a favourite mare, Grey Lady, being used for breeding. In busy times, however, a tractor is a big help in getting in the hay, and for some of the work in the fields where corn, potatoes, mangolds, etc., are grown, although most of the land is under grass.

Nearly half the students are taking courses in gardening. People sometimes ask what they can do in wet weather, but there is always a great variety of work to be done in the big glasshouses and in the potting-shed—vines and peaches to train, grapes to thin, tomatoes and cucumbers needing attention, to say nothing of lettuces and radishes to market; then there are flowers all the year round, and cuttings to be made, seeds to be sown, potting, watering, ventilating, all to be learned.

The grounds at Studley are very beautiful, with their fine old trees, lawns, flowering shrubs in immense variety, rock-garden and great herbaceous borders. Last Autumn the students were very busy re-modelling the rose garden and carrying out a plan that had been drawn by one of them in the Garden Design Course held the previous summer.

Hardy fruit of every kind is grown, and generally the C[illegible] sell after supplyi[illegible] students, and als[illegible] jam, of which, by [illegible] about 6,000 lb. in a year—all home-made. Recently a new orchard has been planted with four varieties of dessert apples which are to be sold under the National Mark when the trees come into full bearing in a few years' time.

Students come to Studley from all parts of Great Britain, from Ireland, South Africa, East Africa, India, and even farther afield. Last term, too, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Germany and America were also represented. Friendships are formed and, although the majority of students will always be British, those whose homes are abroad are very welcome.

Most girls come up at 17 or 18, straight from school, but there are generally other students a little

older, and quite a number of twenty-first birthdays take place at college, as some girls remain for three years, though others are up for two years, and a few for one year only, taking certificate courses in Dairying or Poultry-keeping.

Girls working for a Horticultural or an Agricultural certificate train for two years, and those preparing for National Diplomas in Dairying and Poultry-keeping, or for a Degree or Diploma in Horticulture need three years' training.

Life is very full at Studley and the terms just slip by; there are three in the year, each lasting 12 or 13 weeks. The day is divided between practical work out of doors, which generally takes about 4 or 5 hours, and classes and lectures given in college. On a gloriously fine day it would be good to be out all day, especially in Spring.

Work in the country starts early, so breakfast is at 7.30, and in the middle of the morning everyone welcomes an interval for lunch, and that is when some of the 6,000 lb. of jam are consumed. Dinner comes at 1 o'clock, tea at 4.30 or 5, and then there is time available for study before supper at 7.30. Later come dancing, coffee parties, play reading, an interesting lecture, or a talk over a friend's fire, and it is bed-time. Saturday afternoon is a half-holiday, and Sunday is free except for occasional week-end duty.

The girls go out into the surrounding country for long tramps or bicycle tours, or get up a party to see a Shakespeare play at Stratford-on-Avon theatre, which is only a few miles off. Other places in the neighbourhood full of interest are Warwick, Kenilworth, and Worcester. On the College estate there are woods for picnics, and a good-sized lake for boating; there is no lack of out-of-doors recreation. In the winter there are marvellous entertainments got up by groups of students or staff, to which the rest of the College and some outside visitors are invited; the most famous, familiarly known as J.E. (Junior Entertainment), is given in the autumn term by those who have just come up.

Studley students are very keen, too, on games. They play Hockey and Lacrosse in Autumn and Spring, and there are usually matches on Saturday afternoons. In Summer, Tennis and Cricket are taken up with zest.

The years at college pass far too soon, and there comes the question of what next. Some of the students are going back to their own homes to run their gardens, keep poultry, or help on a home farm; others are going overseas to do the same in one of the Dominions or Colonies—they are scattered all over the world, and a great many of them are married and still finding their knowledge of outdoor things most useful.

A Visit to Studley College

The majority of girls on completing training take a salaried post for the sake of gaining experience. Some continue in paid work and rise to take considerable responsibility, becoming Superintendents, Managers, Teachers, Lecturers, or Instructors. Others who have capital start their own market gardens, nurseries, dairy or poultry farms, and become employers of labour.

The College uniform is really becoming. It consists of stout brown shoes, thick knitted stockings, breeches, and plain tailored shirt and tie. Over these are worn washing coat overalls made of strong khaki drill. Studley green coats are well known, the colour being a dark moss green with the College badge embroidered on the pockets, bearing the motto *Labore vinces*.

As to the chance of employment, at the present time one post after another is having to be declined because there are not sufficient trained students to fill the vacancies.

For some years now the accommodation at Studley has been taxed to its utmost and, but for the depression in 1931, development would have come much sooner. In April of this year, however, the Governors expect to begin the building of a new wing, which will be up to date in every respect. On the ground floor there will be four laboratories: for Bacteriology, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Above there will be fifty students' study-bedrooms, each fitted with running water, built-in furniture, window-seats—all that a student can possibly need, and outside her window a view across low hills and woodland to the Cotswolds which are barely twenty miles away as the crow flies. They will be lucky students indeed to live and work in the new south wing.

Each generation sees some change and development, and all love to come back, and although to them present times and present students are never the same as the old, yet they take the keenest interest in all that goes on at their own old College.



THE YOUNG REPORTERS

By WALLACE CARR

"CRUMBS! Is she mad? Surely she's never going to try to get down to the road that way!" exclaimed Estelle Morgan.

"Seems like it," said Heather Merton. "Come on—let's be there to pick up the pieces!"

Side by side the girls raced to the foot of a precipitous slope down which a lady had commenced a risky scramble.

"Simply asking for trouble," remarked Estelle. "If only—ah—told you so!"

A slipped footstep—a cry of dismay—and down came the lady with a sliding rush, clutching frantically at grass and twigs, but totally unable to check her swift descent. Pluckily the girls endeavoured to break her fall, but only partially succeeded, and a rare mix-up on the ground was the result.

Heather was the first to rise. "Hurt?" she queried.

"My foot," gasped the lady, her face turning white. "It twisted and—*oooo-ooh!*"

For a moment they thought she was going to faint, but she rallied without adding that calamity to the other misfortune. "Sprain," said Estelle, after a brief, business-like examination. "You won't be able to walk with that, but luckily this is the bus route. Does it run anywhere near your home?"

"I live at Friggleswick—the buses pass my door," replied the lady, "but really I am going in the other direction on some extremely important business. I had taken a short cut over the top of the plateau and thought I could reach the road this way and pick up the bus to Franleigh, but——"

"You've reached the road sure enough," smiled Estelle, "but as for going on to Franleigh you mustn't think of it with your foot in that state. It needs proper bandaging and fomentations with as little delay as possible."

"Anything we can do for you at Franleigh?" enquired Heather, noting the look of dismay which crossed the lady's face. "We're free for the afternoon. Evening, too, for that matter."

The lady hesitated. "I don't see how you can, thank you all the same. I'm reporting for the *Gazette*, and on my way to try to obtain an interview with Professor Gasshouse. My editor received the hint that the Professor had made some astonishing discoveries and wishes me to try and ascertain their nature and as much news on the subject as the Professor will disclose. It will, of course, be a great 'scoop' for the *Gazette* if we come out with the information ahead of all the other papers. What I'm telling you, of course, is strictly private, but you see how necessary it is for me to get there this afternoon before the *Journal* or any other paper gets wind of the matter."

She made an attempt to rise, gave an exclamation of pain and sat down again. "Look here, we'll see this job through for you," promised Estelle. "We'll call on the Professor and get all the information we can, take full notes of what he says and bring them on to you so that you can write up the article yourself. What is the Professor's address?"

"Let me see—Franleigh—Franleigh House — yes, that's right, but——"

"Just a moment." Estelle scribbled it down. "And your name and address?"

"The Briars, Friggleswick. My name is Pond. But really I don't think you'd better trouble. You see——"

"That's all right, Miss Pond," said Heather cheerfully. "Here comes your bus."

They signalled the bus to and assisted Miss Pond within. Then, as the heavy conveyance glided away, sat down by the roadside to await the bus to Franleigh. "I've often thought I'd like to try my hand at reporting," remarked Estelle. "It should prove an interesting visit."

"So long as this Gasshouse doesn't rattle off too many technical or scientific terms that we can't make head or tail of. That would floor us properly," returned Heather.

"Not all are like that. Look how interesting Professor Trope made that lecture he gave us last term."

"Yes, that's true. Well, we'd better get out at Market Street and buy a couple of notebooks. Ah—here's our bus."

A quarter of an hour later they alighted, purchased the necessary requisites and enquired the way to Franleigh House, to find themselves directed to a spacious mansion half a mile from the town. "We'll announce ourselves as representing the *Gazette*," suggested Heather. "After all, we're representing the representative, aren't we?"

"Just so," assented Estelle with vigorous peal of the bell.

"Ssh!—not so furious," warned Heather. "If we arouse Gasshouse from his afternoon snooze with a sudden start he may get wild and——"

As if to endorse her words the door flew open and an angry gentleman with a regular mane of silvery hair very much awry glared at them with hard, irritable eyes. "Yes—yes—what is it—what is it—who are you? Don't stand there like dummies. What *is* it?"

The questions were rapped out like machine-gun bullets, and for a moment the girls felt an inclination to beat a hasty retreat. Then Estelle drew herself up. "We are representing—er—the *County Gazette* and——"

Bang!

Full in their faces the door was slammed, and the girls stared at each other blankly. "My hat!" ejaculated Estelle, "if that isn't the limit!"

"What a man to be expected to interview!" gasped Heather. "Why, I thought Professors should at least preserve a semblance of dignity, but this Gasshouse man seems as mad as a hatter—and twice as rude."

"Perhaps he was just going to discover something else—and my ringing upset his calculations. Reporters don't get a very easy time of it if this is a specimen of their reception," remarked Heather. "It seems we've wasted our fares and had our journey for nothing—and now we've got to get right back to Friggleswick and tell Miss Pond that there's nothing doing."

They walked slowly down the steps and along by the wall which enclosed the grounds. Suddenly Heather halted. "I say, I don't half like giving in so tamely. Real reporters don't, They try all manner of dodges and take all kinds of risks in order to get 'copy' as they term it. Couldn't we manage to climb this wall and effect an entrance that way?"

"I daresay we could get into the grounds, but what then?" Estelle looked extremely doubtful.

"Well, we could just stroll gently round the grounds and garden and admire the flowers as if on a visit. Then when a servant or someone comes out and says, 'What are you doing here?' we simply answer calmly, 'We are waiting to see Professor Gasshouse. Is he free now?' After that we trust to luck."

"Might work," agreed Estelle. "Let's try, anyway."

Negotiating the wall proved no easy matter, but Heather, with Estelle's assistance from below, at length reached the top, then bent down and gave her companion a helping hand upward.

"First line of defence carried,"



Backwards and forwards across the lawn she paced.

chuckled Heather as they dropped lightly amongst some bushes on the other side. "Now let's—oh bother, here's someone coming. I don't want to be caught like this or we shall certainly look more like intruders than visitors. Bob down."

Together they crouched out of sight of a prim, elderly lady who had walked out into the garden. "Just the sort who'd send us packing," whispered Estelle. "Hope she isn't going to stay here any length of time."

The good lady's intentions were by no means certain. Backwards and forwards across the lawn she paced several times, then lifting her voice in a high-pitched falsetto called, "Ponto!"

Ponto came — a rough-haired terrier which nosed the ground like a bloodhound and gave evidence of much uneasiness. "What is it?" enquired the lady. "Rats?"

Ponto barked loudly and showed signs of quickened expectations, casting round in ever-widening circles. "He'll sniff us out in another moment," groaned Estelle. "I hope they won't take us for burglars."

"Can't have got our scent as we haven't crossed the lawn," mumbled Heather reassuringly. "Keep still. Perhaps it smells something else."

An intensely trying ten minutes followed, Ponto keeping them on tenterhooks by seeing how "warm" he could get without actually alighting on their hiding-place, and it was with the utmost relief that the girls at last saw the lady strolling along a path which led to gardens on the opposite side of the house, Ponto at her heels.

"Phew! Cramp!" Estelle and Heather stretched gratefully. "Now if we walk out and commence an apparently casual stroll we may —*wow!*"

Right into their very clump of bushes a torrent of water was heavily sprayed. "It's the Professor," gasped Estelle. "He's watering the garden with a hose—away on the left there."

"Wherever did he spring from? Coo — I'm drenched!" panted Heather.

The shower-bath ceased as the Professor swung his hose a little farther along, but fate seemed bent on playing the girls an unkind trick that afternoon, for ten seconds later he was deluging them again.

"No sense in waiting until we're drowned," gurgled Heather. "Come on out and face the music."

Two dripping objects emerged from the bushes. Gasshouse saw them, frowned heavily and "ceased fire." "What are you doing here?" he rasped.

"We're—we're representing the *Gazette*," stammered Estelle.

"*In*—deed!"

"I'm sorry, Professor Gasshouse,

if we disturbed you before, but we came to secure an interview," put in Heather.

"Interview? Concerning what?" The Professor's eyes narrowed.

"Your recent discoveries, sir."

"Who has told you anything about them?" asked Gasshouse sharply.

In a few sentences they explained the situation, noting with relief that a more genial mood seemed to be room radiators did not take long after [illegible] ing i[illegible] them in the library.

"We've clicked!" exclaimed Heather joyously. "This comes through sticking it."

Professor Gasshouse had carefully brushed his disordered hair and appeared in high good humour. Tea for three only had been set on the



"What are you doing here?" he rasped.

taking possession of the Professor. "I see," he said, stroking his chin reflectively as they concluded, "so you thought to storm the enemy's castle, eh? Well, you certainly show a persistence above what I would have expected for girls of your age—and perseverance in all walks of life is commendable. You'd better come indoors and get your things dry and then I'll see what I can do for you."

To dry their clothes over the bath- library table; and Estelle performed the honoured task of pouring out.

School talk, in which the Professor asked numerous questions, occupied most of the conversation, and it was only after the girls had satisfied their healthy appetites with buttered toast and cake that the actual object of their visit was again mentioned. Eagerly they got out their note-books and pencils, while Professor Gasshouse leaned back in an arm-chair with the smile of one who had

astonishing news to impart. "You must understand that I do not intend to relate my discoveries in detail. Such will form the subject-matter of the book on which I am now engaged. In brief, however, I have discovered a new planet."

Their looks showed their disappointment. Weren't astronomers always discovering new stars?

Gasshouse read their thoughts. "A new planet," he continued with emphasis, "*nearer—much nearer than the moon, and inhabited!*"

Disappointment vanished, amazement taking its place. "Nearer than the moon—*and* inhabited! Then why can't we see it?"

"A most natural question. The explanation, however, is exceedingly mple. It is completely encircled y a gaseous vapour which prevents he light of the planet penetrating eyond its own immediate sphere. o use an understandable illusration, it is like a lantern surrounded y so impenetrable a fog that its ays cannot be seen at any disance."

"But how then do the rays of the un reach it in order that it may hine at all?" enquired Estelle.

The Professor shook his head. The theory that all light comes rom the sun alone was exploded three-quarters of a century ago. Intense vibration produces light. This new planet generates its own light and heat by revolving at far greater speed than any other known to us."

Heather nodded understandingly as she scribbled hard. "But you have managed to penetrate this gas cloud or whatever it is, so as to be able to see this new planet and its inhabitants?"

"I have—after many wearying and apparently futile experiments. I commended your own persistence, because more than anyone else I realise the value of it. Without it, I should have given up in despair years ago. As it is, my latest telescopic invention has not only proved my theories but surpassed my highest hopes."

"And what is life on the planet like?" queried Estelle eagerly.

"A point I shall only reveal when my book *The Nearer World* is published."

"But is it human life, like ours? You can tell us that."

"Different. Vastly different."

"Have you the telescope here? Might we have a little peep tonight?" begged the girls.

Professor Gasshouse smiled. "When my book is published I shall give the public an opportunity of witnessing what I have witnessed—at one hundred pounds for a two-minute glimpse."

"Stiff," murmured Heather somewhat sadly.

"So have been my research expenses. Well, that is all the inform-

ion I can give. Actually I had ot intended to impart so much, but my book will soon be ready I am ot averse to a little press notice in lvance. I must compliment you the intelligent and direct way in hich you have put your questions. oth of you make excellent reporters but please tell the *Gazette* that I n give no more interviews whatver on this subject until *The Nearer orld* is published, so I beg them ot to waste their time and mine an endeavour to extract further formation. Good day to you."

It was a couple of exceedingly cited girls who sprang from the is at Friggleswick an hour later. ney found Miss Pond resting her ndaged foot on a couch, but she rgot her pain in her delight at the ws. "A scoop!" she panted. The biggest scoop our paper has er had! Why, there's not a ondon Daily that wouldn't write t a cheque for a thousand pounds thout blinking for such an exusive report."

"Can't you let one of them have then at that price?" enquired eather.

Miss Pond shook her head resotely. "My duty to my own paper ands first, but it will certainly hance my reputation as a securer red-hot news—thanks to you!"

Despite the tea they had already ten, the girls saw no reason for eclining another offered by the grateful Miss Pond, after which s

she stated, "and please let me kn what I owe you for fares."

Three days later the placards the *Gazette*, which was a week paper, splashed the county wi "ASTOUNDING CLAIMS B PROFESSOR GASSHOUSE thereby securing the quickest sal ever recorded and creating no litt sensation.

Although no official credit w assigned to Estelle and Heather the naturally felt a tremendous thrill pride in the brilliant write-up Mi Pond had achieved, and when the received that same afternoon a sum mons to the Headmistress's sanctu they immediately associated it wit the events of the previous Saturda

In this they were right. In th Head's study they found Miss Pon looking daggers drawn and an elderl gentleman who appeared on th point of exploding.

"Are these the girls?" enquire Miss Fielding, looking intensel worried.

"They are," responded Miss Pon curtly.

"Miss Pond you have met before," said the Head. "This gentleman is Professor Gasshouse, whose name will also be familiar to you."

With a feeling akin to horror the girls stared. "Professor—*Gasshouse*!"

"My name!" stormed the gentleman, "and I demand to know how dare you use it in such a ridiculous farrago of nonsense!"

"But this is not the gentleman we saw," stammered Estelle.

"Saw! I've never seen you in my life, much less talked such ineffable twaddle about invisible planets nearer than the moon, discernible only by gas-penetrating telescopes! You have exposed me to endless ridicule by associating my name with such imbecile jargon!"

"You did see someone, then? The story wasn't just your own invention?" put in Miss Fielding eagerly.

"Indeed it wasn't," declared the startled girls fervently.

"Who, then, did you see?"

"No one at my place!" declared Gasshouse emphatically.

"Well, we called at Franleigh House, as we were told, and——"

"Franleigh *House*! I live at Franleigh *Hall*!" The Professor threw up his hands in increased anguish. "*Ach!* You have called on that lunatic Juxpole!"

"You told us House, Miss Pond."

"I did *not*!"

Estelle pulled out a diary. "Here it is—written down straight from your own lips."

"That's quite right," agreed Heather; "but now I come to think of it you hesitated a moment when you said it."

"Did I?" Miss Pond's haughtiness departed, and she looked woefully confused. "I meant Hall—but didn't they tell you that Professor Gasshouse did not live there?"

"I don't think we actually asked. But we saw a gentleman whom we took to be the Professor, and when we addressed him as Gasshouse he didn't correct us."

"But how strange," said Miss Fielding. "Who is this gentleman?"

"Professor Juxpole—a rival in science—bitterly hostile and only too delighted to make me appear absurd in the eyes of the world!" choked Gasshouse. "I shall see him and demand satisfaction! To think that through you two young noodles he has had the laugh——"

"No, no, Professor," interrupted Miss Fielding, siding with her pupils in her downright manner. "I cannot permit that. The girls called at the address they were given and acted in perfect good faith. No blame attaches to them."

Professor Gasshouse glared angrily at her, then, seizing his hat, rammed it on his head and rushed from the room in a towering rage, disdaining even the most distant courtesies. "He was like that in the Editor's room," stated Miss Pond mournfully. "There's going to be endless trouble over this, I fear. He has demanded a public apology in our next issue and has threatened the

Gazette with a Court action and a lot more besides. As for *my* post ——" She shrugged her shoulders.

"We're fearfully sorry," said the girls, "but really . . ."

Two days later they called on Miss Pond to ascertain any further developments. "Dismissed!" said the latter sadly. "I thought that was what it would mean."

"But Professor Juxpole is really to blame," cried Estelle. "Didn't your Editor take the matter up with him?"

"Yes, and Juxpole treated it as a huge joke. Roared with laughter and said that as Gasshouse was always imagining he had discovered a new star with a twopenny telescope he had been paid in his own coin properly."

"Yes, but to use another man's name——" began Heather.

"That's the point. He denies doing so. He said, 'I distinctly told your young friends that *I* had discovered a new planet. If the *Gazette* says Gasshouse discovered it, don't blame me!'"

"He's got us there, nicely," admitted Heather. "I think Estelle and I had better go and see him again and ask him to straighten things out a bit—especially where Miss Pond is concerned."

"If you would," said Miss Pond gratefully.

Estelle and Heather accordingly called at Franleigh House after school the following day. "Ha, r young reporters!" chuckled t Professor. "I wondered whether would be seeing you again. Co to tea? That's right, that's right!

He led the way to the library, ra for tea, then threw himself in a deep chair and laughed so u roariously that the girls could n do otherwise than join in. "I nev thought the joke would get so f unchallenged," stated Juxpol "I imagined that the *Gazette* woul send a proof of their article to Gas house before actually going to pres and that he would be ringing the up to ask what on earth it meant As it is—well, I've wiped out at on stroke a *dozen* scores I've ha against our friend, I fancy!"

"It has led to the dismissal o Miss Pond, the lady who asked u to call, though," said Heathe "We thought you ought to know and were wondering whether yo could do anything in the matter."

Juxpole sobered. "H'm—didn' want a thing like that to happen Well, well, I think I can secure he reinstatement."

"You can?" they asked de lightedly.

"Yes—I've some remarkabl astronomical discoveries to give t the world. Nothing *quite* so wonderful of course as the Gasshouse gaseous planet (!), but sufficiently arresting to class them as front-rank news. If I offer the *Gazette* the information

in advance of all other papers, conditional on Miss Pond's reappointment, I think the Editor will accept—especially if I hint that a refusal will mean that his rival paper, the *County Journal*, will get the scoop instead. If he does decline, however, I will make it my business to get her a post on some other paper. I have claims on several."

"That's awfully jolly of you," agreed the girls in great relief.

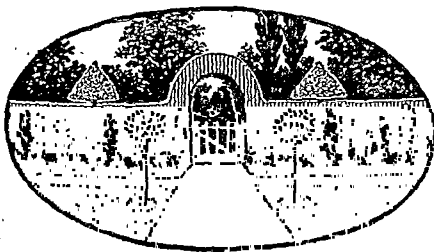
Tea was a merry meal, and it was with immense regret that Estelle and Heather at last rose to go. "I'll see the Editor in the morning," promised Juxpole. "Now is there anything else that I can do for you?"

"Well, there's just *one* thing I'd like to know—if you don't mind me asking," said Estelle.

"What is it?"

"Last Saturday. Was it an *accident* that you watered so thoroughly that very clump of bushes in which we were hiding?"

"You reporters have a habit of asking such *awkward* questions," sighed Professor Juxpole with a shake of his head.





CHARACTER IS FATE

By Marguerite Kingsley

"GOOD-BYE, Mother," said Muriel Gray, and bending over the sofa where her mother lay she kissed her gently. But Mrs. Gray slipped her arms round her daughter's neck and for a moment held her tightly.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said, "and the very best of good luck. I shall be thinking of you. Oh, how I wish I could be there to hear you!"

"I'll be back again as soon as I can, and then I'll tell you all about it," promised Muriel; then giving her mother another hug she hurried out of the room. Outside the front door stood her dilapidated little car, so old that it was known as "the ancient of days," and a few moments later amidst the usual creaking and groaning and rattling, Muriel was trundling down the road, her eyes shining and her heart already beating faster with excitement and nervousness. For this was a very important day in her life and to romantic Muriel, at seventeen, it seemed that on this very day her whole life and fate would be decided!

To-day the first performance of the Dreenmouth Pageant was to take place, and Muriel had been chosen to play the part of Dreena, Spirit of the River. Clad in flowing robes of green and silver, her fair hair bound by a silver ribbon from which floated a cloud of green chiffon, she led her singing dancing nymphs down a long sloping bank on to the wide green lawn that lay before Dreenmouth Castle. A concealed orchestra played softly while Dreena, Spirit of the River Dreen, sang of the deeds of those long dead and gone.

great people in the history of Dreenshire; great also in the history of England. Then with a wave of her glittering wand she conjured them to life again for a few hours to show to those who watched and waited the glories and disasters, the joys and sorrows of those past days.

Muriel loved the part and into it she put her whole heart and soul. The music of the lovely opening song seemed as if written especially to suit her voice, which was surprisingly sweet and full for a girl of her years. She thought of "Dreena," she dreamt of "Dreena," she almost was "Dreena" . . . and then came the crowning thrill!

She was walking down the main street of Dreenmouth a few days before the pageant when a car drew up at one of the big shops and out of it stepped Lady Mary Ball. She was one of the chief organisers of the pageant and, having attended many of the rehearsals, knew most of the performers. When she saw Muriel she stopped and smiled.

"Ah, Muriel," she said, "I have been meaning to speak to you for some time. The producer is very pleased indeed with the way you are taking your part. You have a very nice voice."

Muriel flushed with pleasure. "Thank you, Lady Mary," she replied. "I love the part and the song just suits me." Lady Mary nodded.

"Yes," she agreed, "it really gives you a chance to show off. I am sure you must be very interested in singing, so you will be pleased to hear that Madam Edith Bent, who is an old friend of mine, has promised to come down for the afternoon performance. It is very kind of her, because she is a very busy person with many claims on her time, and she says she must go back to Town immediately after the performance. She is always interested in young singers and if, as a little bird whispers, you are thinking of taking it up professionally, I am sure she will be only too glad to give you help and advice," and, nodding kindly, Lady Mary hurried into the shop.

For quite two minutes Muriel stood rooted to the spot, her head whirling. Madam Edith Bent, the famous singer, coming to the pageant, and she, Muriel Gray, was to sing before her! It was almost incredible! Then she pulled herself together and hurried on, all the tales she had ever heard of the famous singer crowding into her head.

Madam Edith was rich and eccentric. She would only sing when she cared to sing. Money was nothing to her. She took pupils—but only if she liked the pupil. Sometimes a chance-heard voice took her fancy and if the owner of the voice had no money for fees, she would train her for nothing for the sheer pleasure of giving to the world a beautiful

voice. Romantic Muriel's thoughts grew rosier and rosier. Supposing, oh, just supposing Madam Edith liked her voice—and said she would take her for a pupil! Such things had happened, why should they not happen again? Here she bumped into a large fat lady who was gazing at the latest fashions in Messrs. Brown & Brown's. The lady gave her a very cross look while Muriel apologised profusely, although, poor girl, she had had by far the worst of the encounter. Then she rushed home and told her mother. Mrs. Gray had been a professional singer in her youth and to Muriel's surprise, instead of being pleased and excited too, she scarcely spoke, and a worried anxious look crept over her face.

"Mother, what is it?" asked Muriel, puzzled and chilled; "I—I thought you'd be so pleased."

"Yes, yes, my dear," said Mrs. Gray, "of course I'm pleased. The only thing is—I was a professional singer once as I have told you, and I know only too well how full of disappointment and heart-break such a career can be. It is not the life I would wish for anyone I love. I would love you to have lessons and develop your voice and perhaps one day become a teacher, but the concert platform or the stage—oh, no, no!"

But at the word "teacher" Muriel sniffed disdainfully and danced away. Nothing so dull as teaching for her! She wanted to be in the limelight and already she heard the applause and enthusiastic comments about the lovely voice of the latest young soprano, Muriel Gray. The only dark spot in all her bright dreams was the thought of leaving her mother, who was rather delicate. "But I'll soon make heaps of money," thought optimistic Muriel, "then I can take her away and give her lots of nice things to eat."

Time rushed by and the great day arrived at last, and as Muriel tootled along in "the ancient of days" the sun shone, the sky was blue and there was just the faintest breeze to cool the air. "Couldn't have been a better day," thought Muriel with a satisfied sigh and just to see if her voice were working properly she tried over a few notes of a scale. She was driving along a busy main road. There had been a drought for several weeks and it was dry and dusty. Just at that moment a 'bus passed her, crowding her against the curb, and to her annoyance a cloud of nasty-smelling vapour floated towards her. Muriel frowned. That sort of thing wouldn't do her throat any good. She tried to keep her mouth closed and to breathe through her nose, but a few moments later a racing car slid by and poor Muriel found herself enveloped in a cloud of dust which made her cough and filled her eyes with grit.

Muriel began to feel rather alarmed. There were four or five more miles of this to put up with, and already the back of her throat felt sore and scratchy. If it grew worse she would be as hoarse as a crow. Then with a feeling of relief she remembered there was an alternative way to Dreen Park by a turning off the main road. It was too narrow for the 'buses and it took longer, but she was in good time and could easily afford an extra ten minutes on the way. Presently she reached it and thankfully turned off the noisy dusty main road. Before her stretched a narrow lane bordered with grassy banks and low hedges of wild roses.

"Lovely!" thought Muriel delightedly, "and I don't suppose I shall meet a soul!"

But in this conjecture she was very much mistaken.

It was very hot. The sun's rays beat down on her head and her eyes ached with the glare from the white road. All at once, on rounding a bend, she saw some way ahead a little black figure in the middle of the road. She sounded her horn loudly, but the little figure gave no sign of hearing and plodded on. As Muriel drew nearer she saw it was a bent old woman wearing an old-fashioned bonnet. Muriel slipped "the ancient of days" into second gear and hooted again, but suddenly she was startled to see the old woman hesitate, sway for a moment unsteadily, then collapse in a crumpled heap on the ground.

In a second Muriel was out of the car, and slipping her arms round the old woman half dragged her to the side and propped her up against the bank. After a few moments she opened her eyes, blinked, then straightened her bonnet, gazing in surprise at Muriel. "Are you feeling better?" asked Muriel anxiously.

"Oh yes, thank you, miss," the poor old thing whispered; "I'm sure I can't think what came over me. It must have been the heat."

"Where are you going?" enquired Muriel.

"To Plumtree, miss."

"To Plumtree!" gasped Muriel. "Why, that's about three miles from here. You can't possibly walk as far as that."

"Oh, yes, miss, I can," declared the old woman. "I'm a very good walker. And I'm all right now, really, miss." With an obvious effort she rose to her feet and stood, white and unsteady, holding tightly to Muriel's arm.

Muriel glanced at her wrist-watch; then did some rapid thinking. She couldn't leave the poor old thing alone—no one was at all likely to pass that way—if she hustled she could just get to Plumtree and back to Dreenmouth Park in time to dress and be ready for her cue.

Quickly but gently she bundled the tired old woman into "the

ancient of days" and about twenty minutes later drew up outside a tiny white cottage that stood on the outskirts of Plumtree. Once inside, seated on a sofa by an open window, the old woman seemed better, but all at once she turned very white and with a little sigh fell back in a dead faint. Muriel knew all about "First Aid" so, stretching out her patient on the sofa, feet higher than her head, she loosened the neck of the high black dress. It seemed to her ages before, with a little moan, the old woman opened her eyes.

"That's right," said Muriel, "just lie quiet and you'll soon be all right. I'll go and see if I can get someone to sit with you until you're better."

She went out into the road again. About five hundred yards away was another white cottage and running to it she knocked on the door, but there was no reply. She went round to the back, but there was no one there or in the garden. The next cottage was about the same distance away. With a feeling of growing panic Muriel ran to it and knocked, but once again there was dead silence. It, too, was empty. And there were no more houses in sight, only the distant church spire.



She opened her eyes, gazing in surprise at Muriel.

Muriel ran back again. The old woman still lay on the sofa very

still, a queer blue tinge about her mouth.

"Everyone is out," exclaimed Muriel in a tone of despair, "where can they all be?"

The old woman stirred.

"I expect they've all gone to that pageant there's been so much talk about," she said faintly; "if you wouldn't mind staying, miss—just a few minutes—I should be all right if I could have a nice cup of tea . . ." Her voice died away as if the effort of speaking were too much for her.

Distractedly Muriel looked at her wrist-watch. Ten minutes past two! If she dashed off at once she could still just manage to dress and be ready. But how could she leave this poor old thing all alone? Oh, what a thing to happen on this, the most important day in all her seventeen years! Of course the pageant would go on—Gwen Davis, her understudy, would take her place and she herself could sing at the evening performance. But that didn't matter. All that did matter was that she should sing at the one performance Madam Edith Bent had promised to attend—she couldn't lose what seemed to her such a golden opportunity. Her heart swelled in fierce rebellion and a little sob rose in her throat. It *was* hard luck!

She glanced again at the pathetic little figure on the sofa, the face white and suffering, one wrinkled thin hand hanging down, and she knew that if at this moment she acted only to please herself, to gratify her own desires and ambitions, she would despise herself for the rest of her life. For what seemed to her an age, but in reality was only a few moments, the battle went on in her mind. Then self was conquered and Muriel made the greatest sacrifice life had yet asked of her. She gave herself a little shake, swallowed that obstreperous lump in her throat, took off her hat and laid it down.

"Of course I'll stay if you want me to," she said gently. "I couldn't think of leaving you like this. Now tell me where you keep your tea-caddy and all the other things."

The swift look of relief and gladness on the old woman's face made her understand a little what her decision meant.

"Oh, miss, how good of you! Mrs. Cherry my name is, miss, and—and the best tea-things is all in the little cupboard by the door. . . ."

Tea over, the precious cups and saucers washed up and cleared away, Muriel fetched a rug from the car and laid it over Mrs. Cherry, who soon fell into a light doze. Muriel sat quietly beside her. "It doesn't matter now how long I stay," she thought with a sigh, "one of the neighbours will come back soon, I suppose—after the pageant," and the thought gave her a little pang. It would be nearly over now. "Dreena" would appear

again with all her court and invoke the Spirit of the Future, a shining gold-clad figure borne aloft on a golden platform. Then, with a final prayer for peace and happiness, together they would lead slowly away the singing crowd, gay in their rainbow colours, until their voices faded in the distance and the grassy stage was once more empty and quiet beneath the old grey castle. . . . And Madam Edith Bent would hurry back to London. A loud hoot outside brought her with a start back to reality. The old woman stirred, opened her eyes and smiled.

"Oh, miss, I've had such a lovely sleep," she said; "it was good of you to stay. You are kind. . . ."

There was another loud toot, then came the sound of someone hurrying up the little path.

"This must be a friend of yours," said Muriel; "I will open the door."

But she was too late. The door flew open and in walked a tall lady in lovely clothes with the sweetest smile in the whole world.

"Is anyone at home?" she enquired in a rich deep voice. "Why, yes, there you are, Nanny Cherry! Being really sensible and having a nice rest, I see!"

The old woman's face lighted up with joy.

"Oh, Miss Edith, Miss Edith, what a sight for sore eyes!" she cried, holding out her arms, and the next moment the beautiful lady was sitting on the sofa beside her and they were hugging each other and laughing and crying by turns.

Muriel stared in amazement at the scene. There was something oddly familiar about the lady. "Miss Edith" the old nanny had called her. "*Edith!*" Could it be—no, of course not—what a crazy idea! But the next moment the lady turned and smiled at her and with a thrill Muriel knew she had not been mistaken. It was Madam Edith Bent, the famous singer!

"And who is this?" smiled the lady. "A friend of yours, Nanny?"

Nanny Cherry started and blinked.

"Well, miss," she began worriedly, "I'm almost ashamed to tell you, but I don't rightly know what the young lady's name is, but oh! she's been ever so kind to me."

Then, while poor Muriel stood fidgeting first on one foot and then on another and covered with confusion, out came the whole story.

"Oh, Nanny Cherry," cried the lady at the end, "you know perfectly well your heart is weak and you oughtn't to go walking into town and back on these hot days!" and

. . . . .

Then the lady turned to Muriel.

"It was very kind of you to take so much trouble," she said, "and very lucky for Mrs. Cherry that you happened to be passing by. Will you tell me your name?"

Muriel told her, adding shyly: "Excuse me, but aren't you Madam Edith Bent?"

The lady nodded and smiled, and the old woman burst out proudly: "Ay, that she is, and the finest singer in all the world, but she's *my* Miss Edith, too, and I was her nanny since she was a little bit of a thing till she grew old enough to go and earn her own living."

"So you were, Nanny Cherry," smiled the lady, patting her hand affectionately, "and the best nanny a child ever had."

"But, Miss Edith," went on the old woman eagerly, "what are you doing in these parts? You that are always so busy in London?"

"I promised my friend, Lady Mary Ball, to come down to the pageant," explained Madam Edith; "I had arranged to come to the afternoon performance, but my plans were suddenly altered and I could *not get away in time. So, rather* than disappoint Lady Mary I decided to come down to the evening performance instead. And having a few minutes to spare I thought I'd give you a surprise, Nanny, and . . ." She stopped in surprise at the sound of a little choking gasp from Muriel.



"—and I've still got a chance?"

"Then—then you haven't been yet—to—to the pageant, I mean," gasped the girl, her eyes bright with excitement, "and—and I've still got a chance . . . ?"

"A chance!" echoed Madam Edith in surprise.

"Yes, I—I meant—to sing before you," faltered Muriel, "oh, you see, I thought you were going—this afternoon—and I was so dreadfully disappointed because—you see, I thought . . ." and then somehow or other, ramblingly, incoherently, and most surprisingly, she found herself pouring into the ears of this sympathetic but total stranger all her hopes and dreams and ambitions!

She checked herself suddenly and came to an abrupt stop in the middle of a sentence, feeling dreadfully embarrassed and ashamed, and stood, her cheeks scarlet, her head down. But Madam Edith did not seem to think her behaviour in the least strange. Rising, she gave her a comforting little pat on the back.

"But that's splendid!" she exclaimed in her warm kind voice; "you see, everything's turned out for the best and I shall be able to hear you to-night after all." Then she hesitated, looking gravely and searchingly at Muriel. "And I shall not forget that in spite of your great wish to sing before me you yet gave up all thought of self to do a kindness to a poor woman you had never seen before."

Muriel's head was in a whirl. Now that she knew she was to sing before Madam Edith after all, she felt quite dizzy with excitement; she had no thought for anything else and did not realise how her kind unselfish behaviour towards the beloved old nurse appealed to the generous, great-hearted singer. So she just stood there, her face turning from scarlet to pink, and didn't say anything. However, Madam Edith didn't seem to mind, because she smiled and patted her on the shoulder again.

"Well, I shall see you later," she said, "and if I cannot speak to you to-night—I must hurry back directly the performance is over—I will write to you in a day or two and give you any help and advice I can. Good-bye for the present and—good luck!" and turning away she seated herself once more beside the old nurse and they began to talk eagerly.

With Madam Edith's last words ringing in her ears Muriel sped away to the pageant ground, and when the time came she played her part with confidence and knew that she had done well. Afterwards, by the time she had changed into her outdoor clothes, most of the audience had left; among them Madam Edith, but this she had expected, so she hurried home as quickly as "the ancient of days" possibly could to tell her mother all the events of that exciting day.

During the days following, everything, as always happens after these occasions, seemed flat and dull, but Muriel waited eagerly, although with restrained impatience, for the

promised letter; and sure enough, not many mornings later, it came. Seated on a low stool beside her mother, her voice trembling with excitement, she read it aloud:

"MY DEAR LITTLE FRIEND (the letter ran).

"As I told you previously I could not wait until after the performance the other night to see you and give you my opinion of your voice and so I write now to keep my promise.

"Well, my dear, I have learnt from long experience that, at these times, to tell the truth is the wisest and the kindest thing. I enjoyed your performance very much and consider you have the makings of a fine voice. With hard work and perseverance you will be a good singer and an artistic one. But, my dear, you will never be a great singer. Do not be disappointed about this but make up your mind to do your best with the material which has been given you—that is the way to true happiness in life."

Muriel's heart sank at these words. After all her wild dreams—how dull and disappointing! Feeling discouraged and forlorn she glanced at her mother with an unconscious appeal for sympathy and was surprised to see an odd look, almost of relief, on her face. Was it possible she was pleased with this faint praise? Puzzled and hurt Muriel once more picked up Madam Edith's letter.

"And now I have something more to tell you—something about myself this time. For some time past I have been looking for a student to instruct in my own methods of teaching so that she may carry on my school when (a very long time ahead, I hope) I shall be here no longer. This student has been difficult to find, for she must possess a certain type of voice and a certain type of character, but both of these I have, I think, found in you. So I am writing now to ask you if you would care to come and study under me on the lines I have suggested. Think well over my proposition, discuss it with your mother, and then write and tell me if you would like to come to me.

"One last word. Do not disturb yourself about fees. I should want you to live in my house and be a companion to me—I have no children of my own—and naturally in these circumstances I should demand no fees. . . ."

There was more, but the paper fluttered from Muriel's hand and she sat staring wide-eyed before her. Something strange was happening inside her. All at once it didn't seem to matter a bit about being famous. The visions of herself smiling on platforms, roses in her hands, bow-

ing to delighted audiences, faded away, and the thought of being with Madam Edith, to study with her, to carry on her ideas and ideals; to be a leading member of her famous school seemed the finest and most desirable thing in the whole world.

"Oh, Mother," she whispered at last, and there was a catch in her breath, "it's—it's too wonderful! I can't believe it. It can't be true—it can't!"

"It's going to be true," said Mrs. Gray quietly, "and it's just what I would have chosen for you. You will find far more happiness in such a life than on the stage or concert platform. This letter has made me happier than I have felt for years. Although I was ambitious for you I always hated the idea of you leading the life I led for so many years. But this—oh, Muriel, my dear, go at once and get ink and notepaper. We needn't think over Madam Edith's offer. There is no doubt about the answer!"

But Muriel, a perplexed frown on her face, was trying to put her thoughts in order.

"You know, Mother, it's queer," she said slowly; "they say the grabbing, pushful people get on in life—and yet, if I hadn't stayed and helped Nanny Cherry—if I'd gone on and done what I wanted to do—well, probably Madam Edith would never have noticed me at all."

"You will find that people talk a lot of nonsense about fate and destiny," said her mother, "but it is we ourselves who can use or throw away our opportunities. It is our own characters that make or mar our lives. You will find that more and more as you grow older."

Still pondering the matter Muriel rose slowly and went towards the door. Here once more she hesitated. There was still one cloud in her sky.

"But, Mother," she said, "there's something else. What about you? I can't leave you here all alone."

Mrs. Gray laughed, but her eyes were tender.

"Now, Muriel, you're not the only unselfish one in the family," she said. "Do you think I would stand in your way for one moment? Anyway, you needn't worry any more about that. Your Aunt Molly wrote the other day and said how much she wished she could come and live with me; you know she has been very lonely since her husband's death. So run along, Muriel. Get lots and lots of notepaper and we will write to Aunt Molly as well and tell her that her wish is coming true. Run, Muriel!"

And Muriel ran!



AS the train climbed the steep gradient of Shap Fell, Peggy McAllister leaned out of the window of her third-class carriage and blissfully sniffed the keen mountain air. Her solitary fellow traveller, a rather grim old lady in whose charge Aunt Kate had placed her at Euston, glanced at her disapprovingly and advised her to sit down again before she got earache. Peggy, being naturally polite, did sit down, but her bright brown eyes were fixed on the glorious stretches of open country, and her heart thumped with excitement as she thought of the three weeks of freedom that lay ahead of her.

"A nasty bleak spot, I always think," croaked the old lady. "Close the window right up, if you please."

Peggy, a long-legged, curly-headed person of nearly fourteen, obeyed with the prompt good nature that characterised her, though she couldn't help feeling how wicked it was to shut out the bracing April air. Still, old ladies were always a bit fussy, she told herself, and one had to make allowances. She ought to have grown used to their ways by now, having lived for six whole months with Aunt Kate. How lovely to think she'd escaped at last! She hugged herself joyously, and the old lady looked half-enviously at her radiant face.

"It won't be long now before we reach Penrith," she said. "Are you going to stay with friends?"

"With an uncle and aunt I've never seen," Peggy told her happily. "They live in a tiny village called Lathdale, right on the fells. I'm simply longing for it."

"H'm! You'll find it very dull if the weather's bad. April is a treacherous month," said the old lady, and having uttered this gloomy prognostication she ate a cough lozenge and opened one of the

stodgy-looking books she had brought with her to beguile the journey.

Peggy, however, continued to gaze out of the window, and her spirits soared higher and higher with every mile. She was trying to picture Uncle Tom and Aunt Nancy, and their three children whose names and ages she did not know. How exciting it would be to mix with real, live people again, after being cooped up with Aunt Kate in that stuffy little flat; to be in the country again, able to run out of doors whenever one felt inclined!

She had been born in Australia and had lived there until a year ago, when her father had been killed while saving his cattle in a bush fire. Her mother had died when she was a baby, and she had no brothers and sisters; the only relation she knew anything about was her father's aunt, who lived in London and wrote stiff letters twice a year. Different friends had invited the lonely child to stay, but times were bad with all of them, and they could not keep her for ever. There was only one thing to be done. Her father's executors wrote to Aunt Kate—who, by the way, had not offered to have her—and announced that Peggy was sailing for England by the next boat.

Sitting now in her corner seat, watching the changing countryside, Peggy thought of that long voyage and the painful meeting at the end of it, for Aunt Kate, who was a thoroughly selfish old lady and cared for nothing except her fat Pekinese and her own quite imaginary ailments, didn't like children at all and saw no reason why she should have to make herself responsible for her nephew's daughter.

"Still, it is my duty," she had declared, "and I am quite sure that in the circumstances you will give as little trouble as possible."

A faint flush rose to Peggy's cheeks as she recalled that little speech, which she had never forgotten. She had taken up her abode in the prim London flat where Aunt Kate lived with Petsie the Peke, and a couple of maids, and then had begun the dreariest six months that any thirteen-year-old ever had to endure. A daily governess was engaged, since Aunt Kate disapproved of schools, and Peggy—accustomed to open air and freedom—had to carry out a very strict time-table which allowed no margin for recreation, though an hour a day was earmarked for needlework, an occupation the victim particularly loathed. And her exercise consisted of taking Petsie for his morning walk.

Then—out of the blue, it seemed—had come this invitation to stay in Cumberland with her mother's brother and his wife. Peggy had never even heard of him, because

—as her father had once explained —there had been a family quarrel long ago, and her mother had cut herself adrift from all her relations in England. But Uncle Tom had read of her father's death in the newspapers and had written to Australia in an endeavour to trace his sister's only child; and after a good deal of trouble had found out her whereabouts.

Aunt Kate was delighted when she read the letter and knew that Peggy would be off her hands for three weeks, and as for Peggy herself, well, she had lived in a state of breathless excitement ever since she had been told of the holiday in store for her. And now here she was in the train, only a few miles from Penrith, where her uncle was to meet her with his car.

"You'd better get your luggage together. We're nearly there," said the grim old lady, and Peggy obeyed, trembling now that the meeting was so near. Then the train pulled up with a jerk and she got out and looked round anxiously.

"There she is!" said a kind voice beside her, and she turned to face the jolly looking couple who were, as she saw at once, everything an uncle and aunt should be.

"I'd have known you anywhere," said Uncle Tom, "by your likeness to your mother. But you're thinner and paler than she ever was. The London air, I suppose."

Peggy laughed. In the old Australian days she had been as brown as a berry, but she knew that since living with Aunt Kate she had become a shadow of her former self.

"Lathdale will soon put you right," said Aunt Nancy, kissing her. "We're so glad to see you, Peggy dear."

This was so different from her first encounter with Aunt Kate, who had made no attempt at a welcome, that for a moment Peggy had a horrid fear that she might disgrace herself in the eyes of Penrith by dissolving into tears. However, she managed to grin instead, and followed her new-found uncle and aunt into the station yard, where their big car was waiting.

"Now you must meet the family," Aunt Nancy said, and the three smiling children who jumped out of the car at their approach came forward and shook hands with their cousin. Kathie was just three months older than Peggy, a merry-faced person with long fair plaits; Peter was nearly thirteen, and Mavis was eleven. They were not a bit shy, and seemed genuinely glad to see Peggy, whose hand felt quite limp after it had been shaken by the whole family.

As Peter opened the door of the car and stood aside for her to get in, she gave a cry of delight, for on the back seat sat the loveliest cocker

spaniel she had ever seen. Peggy loved animals of all kinds, but dogs were her first favourites, and when she lived in Australia she and her father had kept half a dozen of them. But, with the one exception of Petsie, who was so fat and snappy that he really didn't count, Aunt Kate disliked animals; and so poor Peggy had to forgo the doggy companionship which had meant so much to her.

"Do you like him? His name's Nox—night, you know—because he's so black," explained Peter. "He doesn't make friends with strangers."

But Nox had evidently decided that Peggy was not a stranger, for he jumped up, tongue lolling and tail agog, and fairly hurled himself at her.

"Oh, you beauty!" She bent and hugged him, while the family looked on with approval tinged with amazement.

"He knows you like dogs," said Kathie. "I'm awfully glad you do, because we're potty about them. We've got four others at home, and a pony and a donkey as well as the horses."

"Horses? Real ones? How many?" asked Peggy breathlessly, as they all packed themselves into the car.

"Four. Real? I should think they are! D'you ride, Peggy? Cheers!" exclaimed Kathie, as her cousin nodded. "We'll be able to have some ripping times if the weather keeps fine."

"Don't you go out in the wet then?" asked Peggy in surprise.

"Oh, it isn't that," said Aunt Nancy, who was sitting in front and had overheard the question, "but we get such terrible mists in this part of the world, and when one of those comes on it isn't safe to go far. That's why we 'make the most of sunshine,' as the old saw says."

Kathie saw that Peggy was gazing about her in a dazed manner and laughed softly, realising that the glorious fells and dales must be almost overpowering to someone who had never seen them before.

"Like it?" she said in a low voice.

"Like it?" echoed Peggy, with starry eyes. "It's—oh, I can't think of the proper words! I suppose this is all the John Peel country, isn't it? Do you hunt, by the way?"

There was a short, almost imperceptible pause, and then Peter answered with a touch of constraint:

"No, we don't, as a matter of fact. Do you?"

"No," said Peggy, and would have gone on to explain that she and her father had always hated the idea, but at that moment the car turned into a long winding avenue, and in the excitement of seeing her uncle's house for the first time she quite forgot all about hunting.

Dale Manor, as it was called, was a lovely old house dating from Stuart times, and to Peggy—coming as she did from a new country—it was the most wonderful place on earth. There wasn't time for much exploring that evening, for she had had a long journey and although she protested that she wasn't a bit tired, Aunt Nancy ruthlessly packed her off to bed directly after supper.

But next morning she was up with the lark, having been wakened by Mavis, who was longing to show her the rest of the animals; and they went over the house and grounds before a deep-toned bell called them in to breakfast. And what a breakfast it was, too! Peggy, who had almost forgotten what it felt like to be hungry, fell to with a real north-country appetite.

"You seem to have been up for hours, you young limbs," said Uncle Tom. "I suppose you've shown Peggy everything already, haven't you, Kathie?"

His daughter thought for a moment.

"Well, nearly everything, Dad. Not the attics or the disused chapel or the picture gallery."

"Keep those for a bad day," advised her father. "It's glorious now, perfect spring weather, and you ought to be out of doors as much as possible."

"Let's have a picnic," said Peter. "We can ride as far as Tiger Crag, and have our lunch there and come home by the Fox's Path."

"No, my boy, I'd rather you didn't do that," said his father. "Go to Tiger Crag by all means, but come back by the road; the other way really isn't safe. Your mother and I were very anxious last time you went."

"All right, Dad," said Peter readily. "It is a bit risky, I suppose, because if one lost the track one might easily get into one of those holes. How soon can you be ready?" he asked, turning to the girls.

"In ten minutes," they promised, and fled to put on their riding-kit. Peggy donned hers with great glee, for she had not worn it for more than six months. This was the life, she thought, surveying the cheerful, pretty bedroom her aunt had given her. Lucky, lucky Kathie and Mavis, to live here always and have such topping parents and a brother like Peter, and all these animals. She wasn't envious by nature, but for a moment it did seem to her that life was rather unfair.

Then Kathie burst in to see if she was ready, and they raced downstairs together and out on to the drive, where the four horses were waiting with the smiling-faced groom. Peter and Mavis were mounted already, and it wasn't long before the two girls swung themselves into the saddle.

Each had a small packet of food to carry in a mackintosh satchel which could be fastened comfortably across the shoulders. Peggy, thinking of the huge appetites at breakfast-time, was secretly rather surprised that so little sustenance was to be taken; but as they trotted down the drive Kathie explained that Tiger Crag was one of their favourite places, and they had built a brick oven there and kept a kettle and a frying-pan hidden close at hand.

It was a perfect morning, and in the brilliant sunshine the country looked at its best. Peggy, cantering along the narrow road with her cousins, had to pinch herself every now and then to make sure that it wasn't a dream. In the ordinary way she would have just been starting off with the corpulent Petsie for half an hour's amble in Regent's Park. And instead of that, she was here!

Tiger Crag was well named. It was an overhanging rock which looked very much like a crouching animal, and as they drew near it she couldn't help thinking that on a duller day it might look rather alarming. However, all was bright and gay this morning, and they cooked themselves a truly royal lunch. Kathie had brought food for the dogs as well—for Nox had come with them, as well as the four others who turned out to be setters—and they all had a lovely time.

As they turned to go home they could see Dale Manor, looking the size of a matchbox, far below; for Tiger Crag stood very high, and they had had to climb all the way to get to it.

"That's the Fox's Path," said Peter, indicating a barely visible track which wound its way down the steep incline on their left. "It's a short cut home, of course—at least, it would be, only it's so frightfully tricky that no one uses it in bad weather. We've ridden down it often enough, haven't we, Kath? But Dad's put the kybosh on that. I suppose it's because somebody had rather a nasty fall there last year—hunting."

Again she noticed a hint of reserve in his manner, but her thoughts were fully occupied just then and she did not ponder over it, as she might have done at any other time.

They reached home safely in time for tea, and after that they went out again; this time to fish in the stream which ran through the grounds down to a small lake, on which they often went boating. When they did return to the house it was bed-time, and after their glorious day in the open they retired like four well-bred lambs!

The following day was spent in much the same manner, and Peggy and her cousins became better friends every minute. After her restricted life in London, Lathdale seemed a

perfect paradise, and as the days went on she often thought of the grim old lady in the train who had predicted a dull time and bad weather. For the lovely spring sunshine continued day after day; the sky was a cloudless blue, and primroses and violets were blooming everywhere.

But time goes so quickly when one is happy, and one morning Peggy woke up with a leaden weight in her heart, and realised that she had less than a week left. Only five more days, and then—Aunt Kate. The thought of it really made her feel quite ill, and as she sat up to think things over—instead of jumping out of bed as she usually did—she was almost glad to see that the sky was overcast.

"The weather's broken at last," Uncle Tom said at breakfast. "It may be fine to-morrow, but you couldn't have gone picnicking to-day. So," he told his own children, "your mother and I have decided to take you into Carlisle to-day to get your school clothes. Come with us if you'd like to, Peg, but you don't like shops, I know."

"I'd rather stay here, Uncle Tom," said Peggy. "Nox will keep me company, won't you, boy?"

She went up to talk to Kathie while she got ready, and heard her give an exclamation of annoyance.

"Bother! I've left my watch at Tiger Crag. I took it off when we were cooking up there yesterday, and stuffed it into the hidey-hole where we keep the frying-pan. Well, it can't be helped. But *aren't* I an ass!"

Peggy knew that Kathie valued her watch more than any of her other possessions, and made a swift decision. She said nothing then, but as soon as the car had set off she whistled to Nox and went out, taking the road which led to Tiger Crag.

She went on foot, for a light mist was rising and she dared not risk taking a horse along that narrow road with a deep precipice on one side. But she would be quite safe walking, she thought, and it was very important that she should fetch the watch as soon as possible, before the damp had time to injure it. So she tramped along, whistling, with the cocker at her heels.

It took a long time to get there, and the mist, she noticed with alarm, was deepening all the while. It was quite dense when she reached the Crag, and she had to fumble some time before she found the watch. Good! Here it was. She slipped it on her wrist and turned to retrace her steps.

Then she heard a scuffling sound, followed by a shrill yelp and then a series of faint, whimpering moans. Nox had fallen over the edge of the precipice on to the rocks below!

"I'm coming," she gasped, and

lowered herself down on hands and knees. It was a difficult descent, doubly so now that she could scarcly see a yard ahead of her but she did not stop to think about danger. Nox was hurt and she must go to him; that was all she knew.

She reached him at last, and saw that he had injured one paw so badly that he could not walk. She tied it up with her handkerchief, and then picked him up, meaning to climb back to the road. But she had lost all sense of direction, and although she blundered on for about ten minutes, clambering over stone after stone, she never seemed to get any higher. And Nox was so terribly heavy! Once she found herself stepping into space, and drew back just in time.

What should she do? Stay here, in this thick wet mist which might not lift for hours, or struggle on, with the dog in her arms, and risk falling down a crevasse? Bravely she faced the alternative, knowing that whatever happened she would not abandon Nox.

"I'd better go on, I suppose," she said aloud, and her heart nearly stopped when a quiet voice answered her.

"Yes, that's the best way. Follow me, my child; I know these mountains well. I'll see you safely back to Lathdale."

All the time this voice had been speaking Peggy had been peering into the mist, and now she was able to make out the vague outline of a tall, slender figure dressed in a voluminous cloak.

"Who—who are you?" she faltered. "Do you know me, then?"

The stranger gave a low laugh that was very reassuring.

"Oh, yes, I know you!" she said. "But never mind that now. Just follow me. Don't be afraid."

And Peggy wasn't. She had been terrified a moment ago, but now she felt quite safe. She tightened her grip on the spaniel and with a feeling of perfect confidence followed the stranger, who had now come ahead of her. Her cloak was grey—the same colour as the mist: her hair, which she wore piled high on her head, was very dark, and her face was beautiful and kind.

They did not speak at all during their weird descent. Peggy had perfect confidence in her guide, and even when they got on to what she knew must be the dangerous Fox's Path she followed her without a qualm. And somehow, in spite of Nox's weight, she didn't feel nearly as tired as she had expected. Suddenly she realised that they had reached the bottom, and the lane that led to Lathdale was only a few yards away.

"Good-bye, my child," said the stranger softly. "I love animals too." And then she was gone before Peggy could thank her, and the



"Just follow me. Don't be afraid."

grey of her cloak had melted into the mist.

A little dazed now, Peggy staggered back to the house, to find the family, who had returned on account of the weather, waiting for her in an agony of anxiety.

"A lady in grey?" said Aunt Nancy, when Peggy had had a hot bath and was sitting in front of a roaring fire, sipping a cup of chocolate. "I can't think who she can be. There's nobody staying at the inn, and none of the people who live here would go to Tiger Crag on a day like this. My dear, you might have been killed!"

"And all for my watch," said Kathie. Suddenly she leaned forward and gave her cousin a hug. "Oh, Peggy, it's going to be beastly when you've gone away!"

The vet. came that afternoon and set Nox's broken paw, and when they had seen that their pet was going on well the family showed Peggy the rest of the house, including the picture gallery.

"Some of the portraits may bore you?" said Uncle Tom, unlocking the door, "but I want you to see your grandmother."

Peggy groaned inwardly, for she didn't like old ladies. Still, she followed him obediently, gazing at the dark oil paintings in their massive gilt frames. And then——

"Why—there she is!" she gasped, and everyone came to a standstill. Peggy was pointing one of the portraits, her eyes bright with excitement. "That's my grey lady," she said, "only she's wearing a red dress instead. Why, what's the matter? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Because, my dear," said her uncle slowly, "that is the picture of your grandmother. And she was wearing a grey cloak when she met her death on the Fox's Path more than thirty years ago."

* * *

It was Kathie who told Peggy the story.

"Grandmother simply loved animals, you see, and she couldn't bear the idea of hunting. But Grandfather liked it. Well, one day Grandmother was on the mountainside picking flowers when a wounded fox came limping up. It was nearly done, poor thing, and she could hear the hounds coming. So—well, she picked it up and tried to get down the path with it, but the hounds came after her and she ran and ran—and she fell down one of those holes. They found her there, dead, but the fox was alive. The hounds hadn't touched it."

"Go on," said Peggy quietly.

"So after that Grandfather gave up hunting, and so did the rest of the family except—sorry, Peggy—your mother got awfully keen on it later. That was what the quarrel was about. Well, of course she had

a right to her own opinions, and lots of people think us frightfully silly for *not* hunting—even when they know the story. So that's why we don't talk about it. We—why, hallo, Dad!"



"Why—there she is!"

Uncle Tom came into the room and put both hands on Peggy's shoulders.

"I've just put through a trunk call to London," he said, "and had a talk with your Aunt Kate. Peggy, we've all grown very fond of you, and after what happened to-day we feel we can't let you go. So I asked her if we might adopt you, your Aunt Nancy and I—and she said yes. You'll have to come to Carlisle after all, because you'll be going to school with Kathie. You're one of us now, my dear!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Kathie, Peter, and Mavis, careering round the room, and Aunt Nancy came in to join in the general rejoicings. Nox, in his basket by the fire, thumped his tail with gusto. And Peggy, surveying them all with shining eyes, felt perfectly certain that her grandmother knew all about it and was glad.



SARA CONROY, aged thirteen, clad in a faded flannel shirt and khaki shorts with thick boy's boots on her stockingless feet, came panting up a rocky path and flung herself down among the blueberry-bushes with a sigh of relief. Out of her basket she took a letter and a wrapped magazine, both addressed to herself, and tore the letter open with eager fingers; for Sara was a Lone Guide, a guide who kept guide laws, but never knew the joys of wearing the uniform, giving the salute, or a left-handed handshake; a guide who had never attended a meeting or a rally in the company of other guides.

For her, like other Lones in far-off dominions overseas, the arrival of the post was a thrilling moment; for then came the Captain's Company Letter, giving her all the news of the movement, suggesting occupations and ideas for her studies that a Lone Guide can carry out all by herself, linking her up in a warm, friendly way with thousands of girls of her own age all over the world.

Sara read the letter with passionate interest which increased when she came to the last sentence; "In this month's magazine you will find an item of special interest to Lones; a letter and a competition specially arranged for all our friends on the Lone Trail."

Seizing the packet in the newspaper wrapper, Sara tore off its cover and rapidly turned over the pages of the magazine until she found the letter written by an English guide to her Lone Sisters.

"DEAR LONES,"—(it began).

"Often our guiders tell us that you are to be pitied, poor guides on the Lone Trail, living miles and miles

from other guides. They tell us that sometimes you are completely isolated in places where the post comes in only once a month, and sometimes you have to wait years before you can be enrolled. Well, Lones, we are sorry for you, but I'm sure, like true guides, you remember to 'smile and sing under all difficulties,' and keep jolly cheerful. In some ways though, I think Lones are remarkably lucky, for when you live in an outlandish place, perhaps with savages and wild beasts just round the corner, such a lot of exciting things must happen you've always 'something to write home about.' Think, for instance, how guides at home would like to know —well, say about a country walk in the Rocky Mountains, for the animals, trees, flowers (if any), insects and weather must be very different from those we have in England.

"Lones don't contribute enough to the Lone Corner in Our Magazine. If they would write more I'm sure they would feel less 'lone.' So now, our dear sisters in lonely outposts of the Empire, do send us some news.

"A. Robins.

"Primrose Patrol.

"3rd Oaklea Company."

Sara read this letter with amazement and then screwed up her face in a slow grin. It was amusing to hear she was considered "remarkably lucky" because she lived in an outlandish place. "Something to write home about" tickled her fancy, too; for to Sara her life was made up of endless montonous tasks and her only treat was to walk ten miles over rough ground to fetch the monthly post.

As for a country walk in the Rocky Mountains! Was it really true that guides at home were as much interested in this as she would be in hearing about a country ramble in lovely English lanes?

Sara sat up and looked round her. The autumn air was as warm and soft as new milk; but away in the distance the Rockies towered in a deep purple wall of snow-capped peaks. The giant spruces and fir-trees on the mountains looked like huge pillars holding up the blue dome of the sky, and the roar of some distant mountain torrent was the only sound that broke the mighty silence.

Sara lifted her rather hungry-looking blue eyes to the great heights and gave another grin of amusement. To think that she had lived at the foot of the Rockies all her life and never thought of them as anything "to write home about."

She began to turn the pages of the magazine rapidly to find the other item of news interesting to Lones, and discovered a tiny paragraph on the last page.

"To all Lones. The Captain feels sure that many Lones have all sorts

of adventures that would interest guides at home, and we offer a Prize for the best paper entitled : ' My Most Thrilling Adventure ! ' "

On reading this Sara lay on her back kicking up her heels in mirth, and wished that all captains, lieutenants, patrol leaders and guides could come and have a fortnight of her life in the Rocky Mountains, and then sit down and write a paper on their thrilling adventures !

Then, with a sigh, she picked up her basket and went her way ; for she still had two miles to walk and there were endless tasks awaiting her at home.

But as she trudged along she remembered with another grin that she was enjoying a country walk in the Rocky Mountains and looked at old, familiar things with new eyes.



" Oh, Mother—whatever is the matter ? "

Cornflowers and goldenrod could still be found in odd corners, and the scrub-oaks and the maples, such cheerful friends on cold, grey days, were beginning to flame scarlet and gold in rocky crevices. She picked some scarlet, feathery fronds of sumach, and stopped to watch a wood-mouse scampering on its way.

She glanced at her uncle's flock of sheep quietly grazing in an upland pasture, and suddenly remembered that they were of immense importance to her; for at the beginning of the year Uncle James had pointed them out to her and said: "See there, Sara, my lass. That flock is our fortune, and if it does well you shall go to school, but if it's bad luck we have—and that's more than likely—you must stay at home and make the best of it."

From that moment Sara had regarded the sheep as fairy godmothers, who might turn out to be bad, yet also might turn out to be good, and change her hard-working life, not with magic wands, but with the gold brought in by their woolly fleeces.

The farm was in sight now, a small, black house in a clearing, the mountains behind shutting out the sun; its cattle-sheds and barns like long log cabins among the fir-trees.

There was her mother standing in the doorway ringing a bell and waving a white apron in a frantic way which alarmed Sara and caused her to run.

When she reached the house her fears were realised; for she found her uncle lying on the kitchen floor groaning painfully.

"Oh, Mother—whatever is the matter?"

"Your uncle's had a fall. He was fixing up a shelf and the ladder slipped and he fell with his leg under him. Now, James, here's Sara at last, and she'll soon find Donald and send him for the doctor."

"Where is he, Mother?"

"Cutting wood by the river. Go straight away, child."

"Yes, Mother." Full of contrition that she had loitered on her way Sara threw down her basket, and, forgetting that she had just walked ten miles, she was rushing off when her uncle groaned, "If Donald's got to ride to doctor it will be dark before he's back, and who'll fold the sheep? Nay, Jessie, I must bear the pain till morning."

"I'll fold the sheep, Uncle James," cried Sara. "And I'll catch Bobby and saddle him and take him down to the river so that Donald can start at once."

She sped away like a young deer, and in a few minutes she had caught the horse, saddled him and was riding astride to the wood clearing where Donald, their only hired man, was working.

"Donald, Uncle James has broken his leg!"

"Weel, weel — ye dinna say! There's no luck aboot the hoose these days!"

Old Donald, a dour, silent Scot, went on chopping.

"But you must fetch the doctor at once—Mother says so. Here's Bobby all ready saddled."

"I canna do that, lassie—who'll fold sheep?"

"I will—*oh, Donald*, please start, broken legs can't wait."

"Ay, I'll start, but mind ye, I dinna expect to find doctor at home and it's a weary way. But there, a mon canna do more than his best."

Protesting that there were at least a hundred things he ought to see to first, Donald was at last persuaded to start on his journey.

"Broken legs come first, and the sooner you start the sooner you'll be back." Sara gave a boyish whoop, which sent Bobby galloping on his way.



"Donald, Uncle James has broken his leg!"

She found her uncle still in great pain and her mother doing all she could to ease him; but farm work must go on whatever disaster overtakes the family, and for the next three hours Sara had no time to think of her own fatigue, for she had to do the work of three people.

Then, Uncle James, half delirious with pain, began to mutter: "Tis the sheep were in the fold. Sara, don't forget the sheep—where are you, Sara?"

"I'm here, Uncle, and I'm going to drive in the sheep now."

Sara rushed away and at the end of an hour, exhausted but triumphant, she drove the last bleating creature into the barn.

"No wonder sheep are called 'silly,'" panted Sara, banging the door; but the next moment her triumph was turned into consternation, for when she went to place the iron bar across the door she found it had gone from its staples, taken away no doubt by Donald for some other purpose.

There was nothing but the wooden latch to keep away thieves, and all Sara could do was to find a rope and tie it to the staples.

The barn was in a lonely place a long distance from the farm buildings, and above it was a loft, which was reached by a flight of wooden steps on the outside of the building. Donald slept there at night and kept watch over the flock.

Sara climbed this little stairway and went into the loft. In one corner lay a pile of brightly coloured Indian blankets and above them hung a lantern. Roots and grain for fodder occupied another corner and in the middle of the rough flooring there was a circular hole, a spy-hole for Donald when he wanted to see if all went well in the sheep-fold below.

Sara lay flat on the floor and gazed through this hole at the sheep; the precious sheep, that were perhaps going to turn into her fairy godmothers.

She counted them again carefully and then hurried back to the farm.

"Is that you, lass?"

"Yes, Uncle. The sheep are all safe in the fold and the door's shut."

"Ay, that's fine—but who's going to watch 'em? Jessie! Jessie! Do you hear what I say? We can't leave the sheep unwatched!"

"They won't hurt, James—not at this time of the year—besides, Donald will be back soon."

"Nay, not if he finds the river in flood and goes round by the road. Sara, my lass, you must watch the sheep till he comes."

Sara's mother compressed her lips. She had come out from England to her brother's farm as a young, penniless widow, with Sara only a few months old, and for years she had worked without rest. She had seen her only child rough it and endure poverty and danger; she had taught her all she could and let the few old lesson-books she had brought with her from England do the rest; and neither she nor Sara had ever complained or forgotten what they owed to Uncle James.

But now, looking at Sara's tired, freckled little face as she stood there in her shabby shorts with her knees all scratched and roughened, her mother yearned to tuck the child up in bed; not send her out again

to a lonely barn right away from the farmstead.

Seeing her mother's expression Sara gave a cheerful grin.

" Now then, Mother—it's no good looking at me as if I were your picture child! Don't forget I'm a Lone Guide in the Rocky Mountains and ready for anything. Of course I'll be night watchman, Uncle." She thrust her hands into her pockets and whistled cheerfully.

And, in spite of her mother's protests, Sara had her way, and left the house a little later carrying a lighted lantern, a supper of bread and cheese, the dinner-bell to ring if necessary, a bundle of books, a stumpy pencil and some paper.

There was a tinge of frost in the air and a few stars were out when she climbed the little stairway into the loft. The door had a lower and an upper half and because Sara was a fresh-air girl she bolted the lower half and left the upper one open. She was not afraid; only a little worried about the makeshift fastening on the barn door. She was anxious, too, about her mother, left all alone with a half-delirious man.

" A Guide smiles and sings under all difficulties," she murmured to herself, and hanging the lantern on the hook over the bed, she kicked off her clumsy boots and sat cross-legged on the heap of blankets thinking deeply.

Something must be done to keep herself sufficiently awake to hear the first sound of Donald's return; but for a person almost asleep with weariness already, it was hard to know how to accomplish it.

With a possible chance of school in the future, Sara felt she ought to study the old French grammar she had brought with her; but the very thought of French verbs made her yawn.

She fished in her bundle for the magazine received that afternoon and re-read the letter to the Lone and a slow smile spread over her tired little face—was her lonely vigil in a sheepfold below the Rockies "something to write home about"?

Well, anyway, she could try; and as she sat and chewed the end of the stumpy pencil she remembered her uncle telling her once that the Indians believed the Rocky Mountains to be the portals of their Happy Hunting Grounds. A young Indian would often sleep at the foot of the mountains and the first thing he saw on waking he took for his totem.

She was not a young Red Indian, but she was a Lone Guide all by herself at the foot of the Rockies. And then she remembered something else that would interest guides in nice, calm civilised countries; the fact that the sheepfold was actually built on the site of a clearing that was once a Red Indian residence in the days when the Indians roamed as wild, instead of living peacefully in

Indian reserves as they do now. Donald had often pointed out to her the rotting tepee-poles, the bent willow frames of a rough bath-house, and even layers of musty hair scraped from the hides of deer, elk and moose lying on the old Indian trail.

The stumpy pencil began to write rapidly; but unfortunately just as Sara was beginning to enjoy authorship it gave out, and she was so sleepy that she seized her favourite book, the only story she had ever read about schools and schoolgirls, and began to read it.

What wonderful times schoolgirls had! Plays, pageants, picnics, tennis tournaments and organised games; not to speak of the silk stockings they wore at parties.

Sara had never seen a play or been to a party in her life; but it was not these things she envied these girls; it was their luck in being at a school where one was really taught how to learn; not muddle along as she had done for years and years with a few out-of-date lesson-books with so many missing pages that there were also many odd gaps in one's knowledge.

And to think that at this very moment there were thousands of happy schoolgirls lying in nice little white beds in dormitories, discussing glorious plans for to-morrow; while she, Sara Conroy, sat on a heap of blankets with cold toes and fingers, watching a flock of sheep and listening for the sound of horse's hoofs.

To banish self-pity she began to whistle, and because it was growing colder every moment, she buried herself deeper into the blankets, and before very long drowsiness entirely overcame her, her head drooped and she slept soundly.

Suddenly she was roused by an ominous sound and sat up with a start. The sheep were bleating piteously.

Gracious! Had the fairy godmothers got nightmares or was something frightening them?

Quietly she took the lantern from the hook and crept to the hole in the floor, and kneeling down she peered into the sheepfold.

The door had been broken open, but the sheep had not escaped. They were all huddled together in a corner, driven there by a huge grizzly bear.

Sara went sick and cold with horror; for she knew the creature's habits. Cruel, cunning, powerful, and wanton in his desire to kill simply for the sake of killing, he is indeed a "grizzly" character.

That such an enemy might appear from the distant mountains in the depth of winter was expected and feared; but that he should come on such a night as this had never been anticipated, even by Sara's mother.

The creature was prowling round

and round the terrified sheep, and Sara, taught from earliest childhood to deal quickly with emergencies, knew she must face the situation at once.

She flashed her lantern aloft backwards and forwards and the bear, puzzled by the shifting lights, stood still, as luck would have it exactly under the hole; and then he slowly raised himself on his hind legs sniffing and waving his mighty paws.

Quick as lightning, Sara caught up the nearest object, the school story she had been reading, and threw it at him with all her force and struck him sharply between the eyes. With a growl of pain and suspicion the bear did what Sara hoped and prayed he would do, played the coward, and dropped on all-fours and slipped out of the door.

Would he come back?

Afraid of the light he might amble back to the woods; or he might lurk in the shadows and return later to attack the sheep.

Trembling with anxiety Sara lay still over the hole, listening intently. A furtive movement behind her made her turn her head, and what she saw made her almost faint with terror; for, leaning over the lower half of the door outlined like a black shadow against the star-lit, frosty sky, stood the grizzly surveying her.

He had climbed the stairway and was just about to climb over the doorway.

There was only one thing to do, and Sara did it. First she dropped the lantern through the hole; then she put her own legs through it and wriggled fiercely and painfully; and although the hole was comparatively small, Sara was slim and lithe, and at the moment the grizzly stepped over the barrier with a thud, she dropped into the sheepfold below, bruised and shaken, but with no bones broken.

She could hear the bear's heavy, padding footsteps above, as with cold, trembling fingers she took matches from her pocket and relighted the lantern.

What on earth should she do next?

It was comforting to know that the bear could never squeeze his great body through the hole; although, of course, he could easily come out of the loft again, descend the stairway and re-enter the barn to scalp her in his grizzly way or hug her to death. She felt sick at the thought of his awful embrace.

A rolling and bumping noise overhead made her remember with joy that even the grizzly bear is a greedy vegetarian. He was now evidently feeding on the store of roots and grain, and she hoped and prayed that the feast would keep him occupied until help came.

Summoning up all her courage, and Sara was a plucky girl, she crept out of the sheepfold and closed the door; for the frosty air was

cold and draughty for the flock; then she stole up the wooden stairway and shut the upper half of the loft door softly and quickly put the wooden bar across it. It was only a precaution; for if the bear wished to get out he could easily batter down the barrier with his mighty paws.

Sara's feet were as cold as ice and she guessed that there was snow falling on the heights of the great mountains behind her; but she stood firmly against the loft door on guard, trying to forget the horrors of the situation by thinking of amusing things. Once, Donald, who had been a great traveller, had told her that in Lapland they believe that a bear is too much of a gentleman to attack a woman. She has only to point to her skirts and away he goes!

"But a grizzly is not a gentleman," she thought, remembering his evil deeds. "And if he were, it wouldn't be any good to me," and she looked down at her khaki shorts with a grin.

Good gracious! The bear was moving behind the shutter!

There were chinks in the wood, and Sara caught up the lantern and flashed it backwards and forwards, sending the light in the bear's eyes to keep it at bay, puzzled and frightened again at the strange light.

This she did for two terrible hours until dawn began to creep over the mountains; and then her vigil ended, for in the distance she heard the friendly sound of horses' hoofs.

Seizing the dinner-bell, which she had left on the stairway the night before, Sara began to ring it furiously. Old Donald heard it, and sending the doctor on to the farm, he galloped Bobby to the barn where he found a very weary, frozen Sara flashing a lantern in the dim light.

"Donald! Donald! There's a grizzly in the loft!"

Then everything seemed to happen at once. Donald jumped off his horse, rushed to the barn for his rifle and then instantly ordered Sara off to the farm while he tackled the unwelcome guest.

Afterwards she learnt that he had opened the upper half of the door, waited quietly for the bear to appear, and then shot him dead.

Hours later, when Uncle James's bone had been set, Sara, who had said very little, refusing to go to bed and insisting upon doing more than her share of the morning duties, came into the living-room with hot coffee for the doctor. She had discarded her shorts and wore a fresh, cotton frock, and she looked pale but cheerful.

"Well, young lady, so you caught a grizzly? Not a bad night's work! Tell us how you did it?" The doctor looked at her curiously.

And Sara, heavy-eyed and weary, answered with her queer little grin,

"Oh, I heard him down below after the sheep, so I just chucked a book at him and he bolted."

"Oh, so that's the way you tackle big game. What was the book?"

"A school story."

This led to the doctor asking Sara if she liked reading about schools; and when she had answered "Rather!" Mrs. Conroy joined in and told him that it was Sara's great ambition to go to school in England, and that when times became a little better at the farm she hoped to send her.

Then occurred one of those extraordinary coincidences which so often come to cheer up the despondent: the doctor went in to see Uncle James before he left and had a long talk with him.

When Donald brought round his horse and Sara came out to say good-bye, he said to her: "Will *I* do for a fairy godmother instead of the sheep?"

Sara grinned.

"The fact is you're just the girl I'm looking for to send to my sister in England. She was born out here, but now she runs a school in Brighton and she wants a girl from the Dominion to educate without fees for the sake of old times. She asked me to send her a nice, clever girl fond of sport, the kind of girl who would be a credit to the school."

Sara, amazed and happy, could not believe her ears; and Donald, the man of few words, said: "Ay, 'tis time she was awa' learnin' to be a leddy."

"And your uncle says you are 'nice,' and your mother tells me you are 'clever,' and I suppose we can call a girl who catches a grizzly single-handed 'fond of sport.' So next time you see me, Miss Sara, perhaps I'll have some news for you. Good-bye and good luck!"

When Sara in transports of joy crept in to see her uncle he said: "Well, child, you see what comes of being a good, brave lass!"

Sara kissed him lovingly. "Uncle, do you remember telling me how the Indians sleep at the foot of the Rockies and make a totem of the first thing they see when they wake?"

"Yes, lass."

"Well, that's what I did. I fell asleep and the first thing I saw when I woke up was a bear! He's my totem and he's brought me luck. I'm going to school and I'm almost sure I'm going to win a prize—a prize for writing a story for a magazine about the most thrilling adventure in my *life*!"

BEHIND THE SCENES

Fascinating Glimpse of a Company that Employs 20,000 Women

THERE can be few readers of this book who are not familiar with the name "J. Lyons & Co., Ltd." Even those living in villages far from the white-fronted teashops, so numerous in the big towns, are well acquainted with the Lyons' tea, sweets and cakes sold practically everywhere from John o' Groats to Land's End, as well as outside the United Kingdom.

This great Company, in its teashops, Corner Houses, restaurants and factories, employs more than 20,000 girls.

Messrs. Lyons are famous for their efficiency, and one means of maintaining this is the system of a training centre where new employees study and experience the different branches of teashop work before they attempt to serve the public.

Here the "trainee" learns the duties of the saleswoman who attends to the retail sale of sweets, cakes and other products; of the counter-hands who serve the pies, puddings, poached eggs and other dishes; of the soda fountain attendants; and of the Nippys whose name indicates the alertness, intelligence and helpfulness characteristic of a Lyons' waitress.

There are many opportunities for promotion in this branch of the business. Every teashop has a manageress and under-manageress—highly responsible posts, when you come to consider that some shops employ as many as 150 girls. Above the manageress is the superintendent, who is in charge of four shops. Over her, again, is the divisional officer, responsible for twenty-five shops. Thus the girl who goes in for catering will find good scope for her abilities.

Contrary to what some may suppose, to become an efficient Nippy is a matter requiring the most careful training and practice. Take just one small detail—how to load and carry a tray. In some restaurants it is the custom for waiters to carry trays packed with food and utensils high above their heads. It looks dashing, but in actual fact there is apt to be more "crash" than "dash" about it—and a high average of breakages is one of the caterer's worst bugbears.

Nippy is taught to carry her tray at elbow level, on the left forearm. Bottles are carried separately, by hand. Glasses stand on their individual bases, and are never telescoped one into another. Experience proves that the observation of these rules greatly reduces the amount of breakage.

Messrs. Lyons have their own laboratory, which occupies a large building in Hammersmith Road.

The principal task of the laboratory's 150 workers is to ensure the chemical and bacteriological purity of all foods supplied by the Company, either through their own establishments or through their dealers. Samples of all new materials brought in are analysed. Batches of every product are examined during preparation, and again before the commodities are distributed to the public.

The work in the laboratory is very varied, including such subjects as the testing of flour, dough and bread; the bacteriological examination of fish, flesh and fowl, fruits and vegetables; the control of ice-cream and milk products, chocolates and confectionery, jams and preserves—and, in fact, the whole range of food control and analysis.

The services of the laboratory are further utilised in the examination and investigation of equipment for restaurants and factories, and of the materials used for building and for engineering work. Thus it includes departments devoted to the examination and study of paper and cloth, laundry work, lubricating oil and fuel, metals, the treatment of boiler waters and the general control of building materials.

Women's services are utilised in the laboratory, and for a girl with scientific qualifications a job of this description provides an admirable opening.

A branch of Lyons' activities which employs a large number of girl workers is the great model factory at Greenford, Middlesex.

Set amidst broad avenues, green turf and radiant flower-beds, this imposing group of buildings, with its attendant open spaces, occupies seventy acres of ground.

The organisation is marvellous in its smooth completeness. At one end of the factory there flows in a constant stream of cocoa-beans, syrup essences, honey, butter, cream, milk, eggs and other raw materials.

At the other end flows outward a corresponding stream of boxes of chocolates, tins of cocoa and coffee, packets of tea, bottles of sweetmeats and similar appetising items.

The art of chocolate-making is here seen at its highest perfection, and to the girl who loves chocolates—and who does not?—there are few more intriguing places.

One enters room after room, washed clean as an operating

theatre. Everywhere one sees the machines, of the very latest scientific type, performing their allotted tasks silently, unceasingly—and with the maximum of efficiency.

The problem of how the cream gets inside the chocolate is somewhat similar to the more ancient puzzle of how the apple gets into the dumpling. In the dipping-room at Greenford one finds the answer to the former question.

Here, in a delightful atmosphere of warm chocolate and a pervading aroma of violets, sit hundreds of girls neatly dressed in brown overalls with caps to match.

The hands of every girl employed in this room are inspected before she is allowed to enter; they must be not merely clean, but perfectly manicured. (A special manicure department is maintained for the purpose). It may take as long as a year for a girl to become expert at chocolate dipping; a special deftness of touch is necessary.

Chocolates must be dipped in an atmosphere of 65 degrees Fahrenheit, and in perfectly clean air. The dipping-room at Greenford cost a few hundred thousand pounds to build! Its ventilation is so contrived that every particle of air which enters is automatically cleansed and temperatured.

Girls are employed at Greenford, not only in the actual production of the chocolates and other commodities, but in the numerous accessory occupations such as those of welfare worker and the like. Trained nurses are continually in attendance in the surgery, and many other women are employed in looking after the well-being of the mammoth staff.

A new opening for women is that of diet-consultant—and Lyons have been the first to make this appointment in a West-end café.

If you want to know the benefits of a glass of tomato-juice, or how to choose a well-balanced meal, with just the right amount of vitamins, the young diet-expert in the Vita-Sun Café at Lyons' Corner House, Piccadilly, will be pleased to advise you.

In view of the appreciation with which her efforts are received, there can be no doubt that the profession of woman diet-consultant is due for development at an early date—which means new openings for those who possess the necessary specialised training.

There is no space for a long description of the opportunities for girls who follow a more strictly commercial career. The secretarial and other office positions are numbered by the hundred, and owing to the vast range of the firm's activities the work is varied and interesting.

This chapter would not be complete without a reference to the Lyons Club. It is claimed to be the finest athletic and country club in

Britain; yet to belong to it costs the Lyons' employees, male or female, no more than 1*d.* a week—or 3*d.* a week, if they wish to enjoy, free of further expense, all the athletic provisions made for their benefit.

The Club House and grounds, covering nearly a hundred acres, are situated at Sudbury. The former includes a games room and billiard tables, and there is a pavilion with dance hall, concert-room and stage.

In the grounds are playing fields of every kind, tennis courts, rifle ranges, a bowling green, an open-air bathing pool, woods and parkland.

There is a branch club house on the river at Hammersmith, where the Rowing Section has its headquarters.

The club has 22,000 members and has 29 different sections, including football, harriers, cricket, hockey, fencing, angling, netball and even horse riding in Richmond Park. There is a Badminton Section, a Choral Society, a Dramatic Society, a Literary Society, a Debating Society.

Finally, here are a few figures which indicate the magnitude of this great catering undertaking in which women play so large a part:

Number of meals served in Lyons' Restaurants, Corner Houses and Teashops *in one year*	[illegible]
Number of cups of Coffee sold *daily*, over	[illegible]
Numbers of menus used *per week*	[illegible]
Number of packets of Tea sold *daily*, over	[illegible]
Portions of Ice-cream sold *daily* have reached over	[illegible]
Output of—	[illegible]
Swiss Rolls (various fillings) over	[illegible]
Sponge and Jam Sandwiches	[illegible]
Small fermented goods (including buns)	[illegible]
Muffins and Crumpets	[illegible]
French Pastries	[illegible]
Sponge Cakes	[illegible]
Bread Rolls	[illegible]

NORANDA SEES IT THROUGH

By Peggy Carr

"GERALDINE ADAMS," said Miss Ross in awful accents, "are you aware that the stockings you have on are not a pair? Take a neatness mark, and go and change them at once!"

Form IV, in the throes of prep., tittered audibly. Jerry glanced down at her legs and sighed. The piebald effect was certainly depressing.

"Yes, Miss Ross," she said meekly, and made a chastened exit. When she came back, however, wearing a pair of brown stockings instead of one brown and one grey, she was obviously brimming over with excitement, and Olive West and Pam Pearson, her two chums, knew that something momentous had happened. But there was no chance of their hearing it while prep. was going on under the eagle eye of Miss Ross, so they had to possess their souls in patience until the seven-o'clock bell rang.

"Put your books away, girls, and make yourselves tidy for supper," said the mistress, as she collected her own belongings and sailed out of the room.

"Now, Jerry, tell us the news!" clamoured Pam, perching on the lid of Jerry's desk, which—as usual—refused to shut.

"This suspense is torture!" murmured Olive, who loved dramatic language and meant to be an actress some day.

Jerry looked from one to the other, a tantalising smile on her mischievous face.

"All right, I'll tell you," she said. "You know that empty bed in our dorm.? Well, it isn't empty any more. When I went up to change my stockings Matron was putting clean sheets on it—ready for a new girl who's coming this evening!"

"What? A new girl—in our dorm.? How hateful!" said Pam. "We've had it to ourselves for the last two terms, and if anybody had to be shoved in, why couldn't it be someone we know—like Mary Douglas or Frankie Drew? I thought, by the way you were grinning, that it was *good* news, Jerry," she ended up reproachfully.

"But it is!" cried Jerry. "She's not an ordinary new girl. Matron told me all about her. Her name's Noranda Green, and she's a Canadian; her father has a colossal ranch in Alberta, so she's sure to be wild and woolly—and a marvellous rider,

I expect. She'll be able to tell us all sorts of stories about cowboys and Indians and bronchos and rattlesnakes."

The *ringing* of the supper-bell interrupted her excited speech, and the three girls scuttled into the dining-room, tidying their hair as they went.

"Your hands are not fit to be seen. Go and wash them, if you please."

So the scarlet-cheeked Jerry fled away to the cloakroom, where she used soap and pumice-stone with vigour and success. She was just drying her hands when a deprecating little cough behind her made her spin round.



"Why—hallo!" she ejaculated.

"Golly, I'm covered with ink!" whispered Jerry in dismay. "And I'm sitting at the Dragon's table; let's hope she won't see!"

The Dragon, by the way, was Miss Ross, whose eyesight was remarkably keen.

"Geraldine Adams!" she exclaimed, when grace had been said.

"Why—hal*lo*!" she ejaculated, staring at the very peculiar object which met her gaze.

It was a girl of about her own age—thirteen—who wore the most old-fashioned dress Jerry had ever seen, and whose mouse-coloured hair was dragged back mercilessly from her small white face. A pair of

frightened blue eyes sought Jerry's appealingly.

"Say, can yuh tell me"—what a terrible accent she had!—"if this is the right place to hang up my clothes?"

She was clutching an antiquated coat and hat under one arm. Jerry mastered an impulse to laugh.

"Yes, it's all right—there'll be a peg for you, I expect. But it's supper now, you know—didn't you hear the bell?"

"Sure, but I guess I'm not hungry," quavered the stranger, and Jerry remembered that she hadn't felt very hungry, either, when she had been new.

"You'd better have some. It's sausage night," she said encouragingly, "and besides, Matron'll be looking for you. You're Noranda Green, aren't you? I'm Jerry Adams, and you're sleeping in my room."

"G-glad to meetyer!" said Noranda dolefully.

"Well, come along!" said Jerry, and led her captive to the dining-room. Sure enough, Matron was looking for the lost lamb; and that is really quite a good description of Noranda, for her plain little face wore a hopelessly bewildered expression, and in the tight, old-fashioned frock which was too short for her, she looked exactly like a lamb which has outgrown its prettiness and reached the leggy stage.

She was given a place at Miss Ross's table, and obviously went through agonies of shyness as the meal progressed. It was an unwritten law at St. Mary's that new girls should not be pestered with questions right at once, so she was left in peace, though Miss Ross made several unsuccessful efforts to draw her out.

When supper was over the juniors went to play games in the gym., and Jerry, Olive and Pam took charge of Noranda and tried to teach her the rudiments of "Scrum," which was in favour just then. But she looked so absolutely at sea that they gave up the attempt.

"Haven't you played any games?" asked Pam impatiently.

Noranda shook her head. "Guess I've never had time."

"Why, did they work you so hard at your last school?" asked Jerry.

"Never went to school before. But I sure did work," said Noranda, and glanced involuntarily at her roughened hands. "Ma died when I was small, so I had to look after my Dad and the boys."

"Oh, you've brothers, then!" said Frankie Drew, another Fourth former who had joined the group.

"No, I mean the boys on the ranch. They're men really. Eight of 'em. We didn't have no—hadn't any servants, so I kinda kept the place going for them. I didn't mind. I liked it." And Noranda gave a

homesick gulp which the others were too polite to notice.

"What made you come here?" asked Pam, in a tone that was more disparaging than she knew.

"Dad made some money," said Noranda simply, "and he wanted me to learn nice ways. We saw a picture of this school in an English paper. 'Randy,' he says to me, 'that's the place for you.' So here I am."

Jerry saw Frankie look at somebody and wink, and a sudden wave of anger swept over her. It wasn't fair to laugh at this backwoods specimen just because she looked so odd and spoke in such a funny way. She was the strangest new girl St. Mary's had ever known, but that was her misfortune—not her fault.

"You ride, of course," Olive was saying.

"Well, I can stick on," said Noranda. "I don't care much about it, though."

"Don't care for riding? My hat! And you've lived on a ranch!" shrilled Pam.

"Maybe that's why," said Noranda, but she didn't explain what she meant. "I'm to have riding lessons here," she went on. "Dad wants me to take all the extras."

"He believes in doing the thing properly while he's about it," said Olive, looking amused, and Noranda flushed.

"Yes, he does," she said shortly.

The bell rang for prayers [illegible] after that, and then came [illegible] Noranda's ears must have [illegible] while she was having her bath that night, for her three room-mates [illegible] [illegible]

"I can't think [illegible] to take her! She can't even [illegible] properly. Mummie would have a fit if she knew," said Pam, wrinkling up her tip-tilted nose.

"I never heard anything like her accent! 'We didn't have no servants, so I sure did work!'" Olive imitated it to perfection. "I think she's perfectly awful—not a bit wild and woolly, as you thought, Jerry, but just a dreary little drudge. I can't think why 'Da-ad' sent her to a school like this."

"But don't you see, Olive, that's why?" Jerry, hair-brush in hand, had wandered into her friend's cubicle. "He's made this money, as she said, and he doesn't want her to be a drudge any more. He wants her to be like us."

"Well, I jolly well hope we don't get like her!" snorted Pam. "That voice! She ought to be muzzled."

"Those clothes!" giggled Olive. "I never saw such a scarecrow. I expect she made them herself."

"What would you do, I wonder, if your nearest store was a hundred miles away?" demanded Noranda, who had returned unobserved from the bathroom and was now in her cubicle.

"Sorry!" said Olive, who would have given quite a lot to recall her thoughtless words. "I didn't know you were there. Why didn't you tell us you'd come back?"

"Why should I?" asked Noranda.

"Well, it's usually done. It's sneaky not to. I mean, you were eavesdropping, weren't you?" said Jerry, putting it as mildly as she could because she guessed that the new girl didn't understand the ethics of the matter. And she was right, for Noranda merely shrugged her shoulders and muttered:

"Sounds like double Dutch to me."

"Geraldine, why aren't you having your bath?" asked Matron, putting her head round the door, and Jerry snatched her towels and sponge-bag and fled. She was one of those naturally untidy people who find it difficult to be in time: her possessions had a nasty habit of getting lost or torn at the wrong moment, and however hard she tried to be neat there was usually a button missing or an ink-stain in some conspicuous place. She had had two minor mishaps to-night. In taking off her frock her brooch had caught in the collar, and she had wrenched it out, leaving a jagged hole in the material. Then, in her haste to undress, she had spilled a bottle of chilblain lotion all over her dressing-table.

When she came back from her bath she was electrified to find her cubicle in apple-pie order. All the liquid had been wiped away, and, more remarkable still, the tear in her frock was neatly mended.

"Olive, you angel! Or was it you, Pam?" cried the grateful Jerry, and received a shock when they told her that it was Noranda's work.

"Oh, shucks! It ain't worth mentioning," was that odd young person's embarrassed reply to Jerry's thanks. "I guess nobody taught yuh any better!"

That made Jerry gasp a bit, but she didn't giggle as Olive and Pam did. With all her careless, slapdash ways she was a very intelligent girl, and had sufficient imagination to look at things from other people's points of view. She realised that Noranda, fresh from the back of beyond, could not be expected to behave like English girls who had been brought up according to certain conventions of which this stranger had never even heard.

"I never was good at things like that," she said, laughing.

"And they're just about all I am good for," was Noranda's quaint rejoinder, "so I guess you an' me's quits!"

Jerry lay awake for a long time that night, thinking of the stranger from the west, who, unless she were much mistaken, was in for a bad time at St. Mary's. Of course Olive

and Pam were right in a way; it was hard luck on them to have someone like Noranda Green foisted on them in the middle of the term; but that was nothing to do with Noranda herself.

"She'll get it hot from everyone," Jerry reflected, snuggling down on her pillow; "for the staff will be down on her like a ton of bricks because of her frightful grammar and the ghastly bricks she's bound to drop; and the girls will simply *hoot* at her clothes, and make fun of her because she can't play games. And she's such a decent kid really, underneath it all. I must talk to Olive and Pam before breakfast!"

That being decided, she fell asleep. She dreamt confusedly of an enormous ranch which bore a strong resemblance to St. Mary's school, where horses and cattle had divided into rival teams to play "Scrum." They made such a noise that at last she woke up, and found Noranda, fully dressed, busily brushing out her cubicle.

"Noranda! But the maids do that!" gasped Jerry. "How long have you been up?"

"Oh, since about five, I reckon. I'm an early riser," said Noranda, as she went out on to the landing to put the broom back in the cupboard where she had found it.

"You'd better get back into bed," advised Jerry. "We're not allowed to get up before the bell rings at seven," and the new girl obeyed. But although it was only six o'clock it was fairly light, and Jerry felt wide-awake now, so she went and sat on Noranda's bed and they had a long talk about Canada.

"It's awfully funny, really," Jerry remarked, when she had heard all about "Da-ad" and the boys, and the Three-Star Ranch; "people usually come to school to learn to work—my pater's always dinning that into me!—but you've come to learn how to play. You—you'll hate it rather to begin with, I expect."

Noranda nodded gloomily. "Guess I shan't be the cream in anybody's coffee," she agreed; and then the seven-o'clock bell rang and brought the conversation to a close.

By various mysterious signals Jerry managed to convey to Olive and Pam that their presence was required in the boot cupboard before breakfast; so as soon as they were dressed they adjourned to this convenient rendezvous, where they could talk unmolested.

"It's about Noranda," Jerry began. "She's a jolly good sort, you know—I've been talking to her while you two were asleep—and—and I think we three ought to stick up for her. She's sure to have a pretty thin time here, and after all, she is one of us in a way, as she's been put in our room. What do you think?"

"It depends on what you mean

by sticking up for her," Pam answered cautiously. "If you mean we should be decent to her, I'm all for it, but if it comes to taking her part against the others when they start ragging her and all that, well, I think that's going too far."

"So do I," said Olive firmly. "We don't want her always tagging after us, Jerry. Her being shoved into our bedroom doesn't mean she's our lifelong responsibility, you fathead."

"I know it doesn't, but still——" Jerry sighed. She couldn't explain herself very well, but she knew she was right. "I'm going to try it anyway," she declared, "and if you two don't want to—well, you needn't."

"Rot, Jerry! We'll back you up if you're so keen—we three have always been in things together," said Pam, with lively recollections of the many scrapes they had shared during their sojourn at St. Mary's. "But frankly I don't think she's worth it. She's so deadly dull!"

"Let's make a bargain," suggested Olive. "We'll stick up for the kid for all we're worth for a month, say. That'll bring it to half-term. Then, if she really is the hopeless dud she appears to be, we'll let her paddle her own canoe!"

"Done!" said Jerry gratefully, and they scampered off to breakfast.

As a protégée Noranda Green proved extremely disappointing, and although the three friends kept their bargain and defended her valiantly against "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"—namely, the merciless ridicule of the other girls, they never made any headway with her, or, as Pam expressed it, "got anything back at all." Her manners and speech did improve, certainly, but that was not due to their influence, but rather to the combined efforts of the staff and prefects, who corrected her every time she made a slip.

She wasn't much good at lessons, though she obviously tried hard; and at games she was an utter failure. Even at riding, where she should have excelled, she seemed to be a rabbit. She had a good seat, naturally, but she clung to her horse like the veriest novice and hated cantering.

"Thank goodness the month's nearly up!" said Olive, one bright afternoon in late February. "I should think even you are convinced now, Jerry, that our endeavours are in vain!"

"No," said Jerry obstinately.

"Oh, you say that because she mended your stockings last night!" said Pam. "She has her uses, of course——"

"It isn't that! But I still feel certain that there is something in her. I'm perfectly sure," said Jerry earnestly, "that if any big emergency cropped up, she'd see it through."

Olive and Pam merely snorted.

and Pam were right in a way; it was hard luck on them to have someone like Noranda Green foisted on them in the middle of the term; but that was nothing to do with Noranda herself.

"She'll get it hot from everyone," Jerry reflected, snuggling down on her pillow; "for the staff will be down on her like a ton of bricks because of her frightful grammar and the ghastly bricks she's bound to drop; and the girls will simply *hoot* at her clothes, and make fun of her because she can't play games. And she's such a decent kid really, underneath it all. I must talk to Olive and Pam before breakfast!"

That being decided, she fell asleep. She dreamt confusedly of an enormous ranch which bore a strong resemblance to St. Mary's school, where horses and cattle had divided into rival teams to play "Scrum." They made such a noise that at last she woke up, and found Noranda, fully dressed, busily brushing out her cubicle.

"Noranda! But the maids do that!" gasped Jerry. "How long have you been up?"

"Oh, since about five, I reckon. I'm an early riser," said Noranda, as she went out on to the landing to put the broom back in the cupboard where she had found it.

"You'd better get back into bed," advised Jerry. "We're not allowed to get up before the bell rings at seven," and the new girl obeyed. But although it was only six o'clock it was fairly light, and Jerry felt wide-awake now, so she went and sat on Noranda's bed and they had a long talk about Canada.

"It's awfully funny, really," Jerry remarked, when she had heard all about "Da-ad" and the boys, and the Three-Star Ranch; "people usually come to school to learn to work—my pater's always dinning that into me!—but you've come to learn how to play. You—you'll hate it rather to begin with, I expect."

Noranda nodded gloomily. "Guess I shan't be the cream in anybody's coffee," she agreed; and then the seven-o'clock bell rang and brought the conversation to a close.

By various mysterious signals Jerry managed to convey to Olive and Pam that their presence was required in the boot cupboard before breakfast; so as soon as they were dressed they adjourned to this convenient rendezvous, where they could talk unmolested.

"It's about Noranda," Jerry began. "She's a jolly good sort, you know—I've been talking to her while you two were asleep—and—and I think we three ought to stick up for her. She's sure to have a pretty thin time here, and after all, she is one of us in a way, as she's been put in our room. What do you think?"

"It depends on what you mean

by sticking up for her," Pam answered cautiously. "If you mean we should be decent to her, I'm all for it, but if it comes to taking her part against the others when they start ragging her and all that, well, I think that's going too far."

"So do I," said Olive firmly. "We don't want her always tagging after us, Jerry. Her being shoved into our bedroom doesn't mean she's our lifelong responsibility, you fathead."

"I know it doesn't, but still——" Jerry sighed. She couldn't explain herself very well, but she knew she was right. "I'm going to try it anyway," she declared, "and if you two don't want to—well, you needn't."

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There was no time to continue the discussion, as they were due for their riding-lesson in half an hour, and had to change.

Noranda had her uniform by now and no longer appeared in the outlandish garments she had worn when she arrived; but even so she never looked like the other girls. She was scrupulously neat, but never smart; somehow or other her clothes weren't quite right. But to-day, as she came down in her riding-kit which had just come from the maker's, she really looked better than they had ever seen her. The jodhpurs were well cut, and the thick buttercup-yellow sweater suited her pale complexion and vivid blue eyes.

"You look jolly nice," said Jerry approvingly; and Noranda flushed.

"You've torn your right cuff," she pointed out. "I'd have mended it if I'd known."

Jerry ran indoors and hailed Mary Douglas, a Fourth former who didn't take riding, and asked her to pin up the cuff in question. Mr. Harris, the riding master, was very strict about things like that. Mary had a safety-pin and cleverly hid the tear.

"It's rather a *big one*," she said apologetically.

"Doesn't matter. Thanks awfully!" and Jerry fled.

Mr. Harris came up with the horses and two grooms, and after the usual delays the cavalcade set off. Jerry, who was one of the best riders in the lower school, had a new mount to-day, a beautiful chestnut called Rex.

"He's a fine chap," said Mr. Harris, "but you'll have to let him get to know you before you take any liberties with him"; and Jerry promised to remember.

There were a dozen girls out this afternoon. Olive and Pam, neither of whom had ridden very long, kept at the rear with the master, but Jerry and some other old stagers rode on ahead with one of the grooms. Noranda, on a powerful grey called Janet, was hanging back as usual. It so happened that the weather had not been good lately; there had been one or two frosts, during which the horses had had no exercise to speak of, and so they were unusually frisky to-day. The brilliant sunshine, a foretaste of spring, seemed to have got into their blood.

Jerry decided that she liked Rex, whose movements were beautifully free, and promised herself a good gallop when they reached the downs. He seemed to guess what was in her mind, for he quickened his pace as they drew near the open country, and she laid her hand on his neck.

"Steady, boy——" She broke off sharply, for he had stumbled, and as she withdrew her hand the safety-pin flew open and stuck right into him. She felt his nervous start and jerked her hand away, and in

doing so scratched him badly. He plunged forward and, despite her efforts to hold him in, broke away from the rest and made for the downs at a wild gallop.

Jerry heard the groom's exclamation and Mr. Harris's answering shout—and that was all she did hear, for Rex was going like the miraculous fashion, and dimly wondered how the adventure would end. Perhaps Rex would stumble or slip down—— Then, with a thrill of horror, she realised what was happening. There was a certain disused chalk pit, in the region of which the girls were never allowed to go—and he was making straight for it.



It was a desperate race.

wind. Luckily she didn't lose her head. She gripped him tightly with her knees and hung on for all she was worth, but it was impossible *to control him in any way. Unnerved* by the sudden pain inflicted by a strange rider, he was bolting like one possessed.

Breathless, aching, and badly scared, Jerry kept her seat in some

She strained her ears and caught the sound of galloping hooves behind her. Mr. Harris and the grooms were in hot pursuit, but they would not—*could not—be in time.* Then the hooves drew nearer, and had she been able to look round she would have seen Noranda riding her grey like a demon.

It was a desperate race, and none

of the girls who watched it ever *forgot* the agonising suspense. Noranda, *lying forward like* a jockey, *was urging Janet forward* with almost superhuman strength. She had reached the men—had outstripped them—but she was a long way *from* Jerry, and the edge of the chalk pit was horribly near.

"Go it, Noranda!" shrieked Olive and Pam, but that flying figure could not hear. She was gaining on Jerry, though; *they* could see that. They *held their breath as the grey mare,* using every ounce of her *strength,* overtook the runaway.

Jerry closed her eyes. She could not have thrown herself off even if she had tried. Vaguely—for her head was swimming—she wondered if she would feel the terrific impact when she and Rex went over the edge . . . *And then she felt her* bridle seized; and the horse swung round in fresh terror, and went galloping over the turf, heading towards the golf links and safety. The shock was too much. She felt herself slipping.

"Hang on!" said Noranda's voice beside her, and Jerry, making one last effort, did hang on till Rex, panting and foam-flecked, came to a standstill of his own accord.

Mr. Harris said it was the best piece of riding he *had* ever *seen*. But for Noranda's pluck and skill, Jerry would certainly have been killed.

"I didn't know Janet had got so much speed in her!" he *marvelled.* "You're a wizard with *horses,* Miss Green. And I always thought you were in the duffers' class!"

They were back at St. Mary's now, and Noranda had recovered from the *deadly faintness which had assailed* her when she realised that she had brought off her *coup.*

"I guess I could *ride before* I could walk," she said gruffly. "I've grown up in the saddle, and I thought I was pretty smart. But a year ago I got badly jammed in a stampede, and it kinda *put me* off. Well, my Dad says it takes a scare to cure a scare, and I sure had a good one to-day!"

After that, of course, she was hailed as a heroine, and her lean days at St. Mary's were over for *good and all.* She *didn't* change, *however,* but remained the same shy, unassuming Noranda whose chief aim in life was to mend things and tidy up. But the girls didn't mind that now.

"She won't need our support *any* longer," *Jerry said half-regretfully* to Olive and Pam that night.

"That's just where you're wrong," said Noranda, who had once again entered the room *unnoticed.* "*I* guess *I'll always need that. Oh,* sorry, *eavesdropping, was I?*" And she gave a belated cough.

She is paying her *father a* visit this summer, and Jerry is going with her, to visit Three-Star *Ranch.*

DIANA'S TROPHIES

by

F. O. H. NASH



ON a glorious afternoon in mid-July two girls of fourteen lay in the long grass on the banks of the Saskatchewan River, gazing down at the restless, swirling waters. Diana Reed, the younger and slighter of the two, rolled over on to her side with a laugh, and looked up at the blue sky overhead.

"Everything out here seems so free and wild," she said, after a moment, for her cousin, Jeanie Hume, seemed to expect Di to explain why she was chuckling.

"I daresay it does after Wimbledon!" Jeanie said good-humouredly.

A week before, Di had arrived from England to spend a few weeks on her uncle's farm in North-West Saskatchewan. She had had measles in the spring, and had been looking rather white and pasty ever since, so when the invitation had arrived from Canada, Di had been given leave from school for the last three weeks of the summer term.

She had crossed the Atlantic with her father, who had business in Montreal and some other big towns. At the end of August Mr. Reed was coming to fetch his girl and to stay a week or two with his sister, Jeanie's mother.

The whole expedition—the journey to Liverpool and across the Atlantic, and the landing in Canada followed by three days in the train—had been a thrilling adventure; much more like a film than real life, Diana thought! She felt as if she had arrived in another world. The day before she had been taken to a parade of Cree Indians, and could not get over the feeling that these magnificent people in feathered head-dresses and beaded buckskin suits were all part of an unusually exciting circus!

"I love it all, and weren't those

Indians great!" Diana went on. "But I do think the early settlers were brave! Fancy having thousands of people like that howling round you with scalping-knives and tomahawks!"

Jeanie nodded.

"It must have been pretty grim. When my Grandfather came up here in 1885 Dad was only a year old, and he and Granny had to stay at the fort down the river there, because there was a racket going on with Big Bear and Poundmaker—they were two braves—and Grandfather and the other men went ahead and gave them a settling, but it only kept them quiet for a bit, and the soldiers had to come up here later on and calm them down."

"Do you have any trouble with the Indians now?" Diana asked, greatly interested.

"Only when they get hold of whisky. It's against the law to supply them, but I heard Dad say the other day that someone was peddling it to them now at intervals."

"Well, I guess we'd better be catching the ponies and getting home," Jeanie said presently. Di had ridden in England, and had been delighted when Jeanie said she might ride her pony, Binkie, "if she could stick on!" She was determined to do that if it meant holding on to Binkie's mane with both hands!

"What are you going to ride?" she had asked.

"Buckskin. He's Jock's pony, and he'd throw you over his head every time!" laughed Jeanie. Her brother Jock was away at College in Quebec.

The two trotted home. Buckskin was still decidedly fresh, but Jeanie rode him astride as easily as the absent Jock would have done. She had been tumbling off and on ponies since she was three.

The Humes' farm-house was situated on a low hill, and commanded a wonderful view of the rolling prairie. Wheatfields, the grain already turning golden in the hot sun, stretched away on all sides with here and there a pasture dotted with clumps of poplars.

Diana was much interested in what Jeanie called the "sloughs"—marshy patches of land fringed with willow trees—that provided a home for every kind of wild fowl. She would lie and watch the birds for hours when Jeanie was busy with any job with which she could not help, and tried to describe them afterwards so as to learn their names.

"To-morrow I must be away all day," Mr. Hume announced at supper that evening. "At last we've found out who's been selling whisky to the Indians. It's that no-account, Shady Green, who lives down by the river flats. The police caught him red-handed, and two Indians as well—Running Rabbit and Spotted Calf—and all three are locked up in the

police barracks. They'll be up for trial to-morrow." Mr. Hume was senior magistrate of the district.

"In that case I'll come with you and do some shopping. Jeanie, you must look after things here. What would you like to do, Di? Come to town with us or stay here with Jeanie?" Mrs. Hume asked.

"Stay here, please!" Di did not want to waste a moment away from the farm, especially as she felt sure that in the town she would only have visited the stores and not been allowed to go to the court to see the Indians with those delightful names.

"Very well, dear, just as you like," Mrs. Hume said, smiling. She was very glad that her niece from across the water was so happy and contented with life on the prairie.

The next morning Mr. and Mrs. Hume set off in the car directly after breakfast. All the morning Di helped Jeanie with various chores and then the two sat down to a well-earned dinner.

"What shall we do afterwards?" the visitor asked.

"You can go out on Binkie if you like. I haven't got much to do, but I can't leave the place with Mum and Dad away. Alice hasn't got any head and she'd only have hysterics if any of the stock got in a bog-hole or tied up in the fencing. All the men are down in the hundred acres," Jeanie explained.

"All right, I think I will go for a ride, if you're sure you wouldn't mind."

Half an hour later Diana had saddled Binkie and was trotting away. She was secretly rather pleased to be going off by herself like this, for she had so much to think over and dream about, and she had discovered already that there is very little time for dreaming on a Canadian farm in summer-time!

What would the girls at school say when she told them all about this strange land, where people with names like Running Rabbit and Spotted Calf seemed as common as the Mr. Browns and Mrs. Smiths of England?

"I must try and take home some really exciting trophies, if I can," she thought, "or else they'll think I'm making it all up! I'll write to Daddy to-morrow and ask him to pick up something startling if he can. Pity that nearly all his business is in the big places."

Half an hour's ride brought Diana to a gate that Jeanie had told her led to the Indian Reservation. A short distance inside the gate the ground rose to a small hill, crowned with a clump of tall poplars. It all looked cool and inviting, and a feeling of peace and quiet seemed to hang over the scene. There was no one about.

"I should think I might go in a little way," Di thought. "Uncle

did say something about not annoying the Indians, or going into the reservations without being invited, but there doesn't seem anyone to be annoyed. I expect they've all gone down to the town to see what happens at the trial." She hitched Binkie to the gate-post and climbed over the gate. Everything was very quiet.

Di strolled about just inside the gate for a few minutes, and then ventured farther in the direction of the little hill. She was soon scrambling up the slope. Suddenly, she stopped short with a gasp, unable to believe her eyes. On a branch of one of the larger trees was the full regalia of an Indian Chief. Diana gazed, fascinated, as she took in every detail.

"Well, I never!" she said aloud. "Someone can't think much of that outfit or they wouldn't stick it up there to spoil! I suppose the man it belonged to had some new things and didn't need these any more. I'll try and get a nearer look."

Another tree, with plenty of low branches, was growing alongside the one with the Indian dress. Di had always been good at "gym," so she soon managed to pull herself up far enough to take the things out of the other tree. Laden as she was, she contrived to drop to the ground, and there she examined her find. It consisted of a feather head-dress and a beautiful buckskin suit.

"I expect I could keep them," she thought. "Anyhow, I'll take them back to Jeanie and see what she says."

The easiest way to carry the things was to put them on, so Diana arrayed herself in the head-dress, which was very big and heavy, and the suit, which fitted over her own frock. These would be trophies indeed to take home to England with her!

"I suppose I couldn't take them back to school with me," and Di giggled at the thought of what Matron would say if she produced this "uniform" from her trunk. "But I could take some snap-shots to show everybody. Even Myrtle has never found anything like these!"

Myrtle Roper was in the same dormitory as Di, and always managed to have wonderful adventures when she went for a holiday, even in places like Hythe and Seaview.

Half an hour later Jeanie was surprised to see a miniature Chief riding into the farm-yard on Binkie. The pony stopped at sight of Jeanie and Di fell off in a heap. She jumped up again, laughing, but stopped short at the frozen look of horror on her cousin's face.

"Di, where on earth did you get those things?"

In a few words Di explained, and then was cut short by Jeanie's horrified—"Do you know what you've done? You've robbed Old Big Bear's grave! The Crees bury their

dead among trees, and put all their outfit near them for the Great Spirit to take away to the Happy Hunting Grounds. They'll be wild when they find out what you've done. What on earth made you take them? This is a mix-up!"



She managed to pull herself up.

Diana was terribly crestfallen, and said she had thought "they couldn't be wanted any more, stuck up in that old tree."

"I guess we'd better not let Dad know," Jeanie said, much worried. "He'll have had trouble enough with the Indians to-day, especially if he's had to sentence any of them. They mayn't be very friendly for a while. We'll have to straighten this up alone!"

She thought for a moment, then an idea struck her.

"Can you remember which tree you took them from, and something about how they were arranged?"

"Yes, I'm sure I can." Di could still see those strange-looking objects in her mind's eye.

"Good. That's our only chance. We'll have to slip out to-night after Mum and Dad are asleep, and put

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"Good. That's our only chance. We'll have to slip out to-night after Mum and Dad are asleep, and put

them back again. You're absolutely sure no one saw *you?*"

"I'm positive."

"Well, come on then! We'll hide these things under the hay in the loft and trust to luck that they aren't missed. It's a good thing that the Indians interested in this trial all farm on the other side of the Reserve. We can't take the ponies—we'll have to walk so that we can dodge into the grain if anyone comes along."

Diana felt completely crushed. She suddenly realised that this big, wild country contained all kinds of pitfalls unknown to Wimbledon. How was one to steer clear of them on a six-weeks' visit? She helped her cousin with the evening work, very glad to have something to do to fill up those long hours before they could get rid of the "contraband."

Mr. and Mrs. Hume came home tired and hungry, and much too full of the day's happenings to notice that the two girls were rather silent. Soon after supper all the family went to bed, and silence reigned over the farm.

Di slept in Jeanie's room, and as soon as the July night was dark enough the two girls slipped out of bed and put on a few clothes. Luckily the front porch was under their window and Jeanie climbed silently out, as she and Jock had done many a time before in their lives. She waited to give Di a hand and then slid down one of the uprights of the porch. Di followed her safely and soon joined her cousin on the ground. The latter had some bones for the dogs.

"They mustn't follow us, whatever happens," she whispered. The two soon reached the barn and retrieved Di's trophies from under the hay. They then divided the bones between Rusty and Trigger, the two collies, and circling the buildings made their way across the pasture to the north grain-field.

The moon was getting up now and soon the prairie was bathed in bright moonlight, and looking like fairyland, Di thought. From time to time a soft little breeze, with a fresh, spicy flavour, rippled the grain, or the hoot of an owl would break the silence. Jeanie seemed to notice nothing of all this. It was too familiar and her whole mind was taken up with thinking how this very awkward affair could be settled.

The way was very long to Di, who soon began to wish herself safely in bed. The girls kept close to the grain and at long last came opposite to the gate of the Reserve and started to cross the trail. Then, to their utter dismay, the quiet was suddenly broken by the sharp "clip-clop" of an approaching team.

"Quick!" Jeanie whispered, and grabbing Di by the arm she pulled

her cousin back to the grain and crawled carefully in.

The team came nearer, and the girls could hear the guttural tones of Indians. Jeanie peered very cautiously between the stalks.

"Young Big Bear," she whispered, and then the team stopped exactly opposite to the hiding-place.

hair seemed to rise on her head, and it was only Jeanie's grip on her arm which kept the younger girl from jumping up in terror and begging for mercy. Through her mind there flashed a vivid picture of her mother unpacking a box containing her scalp. Jeanie's less lively imagination was more con-



Di's hair seemed to rise on her head.

cerned with the way her father and mother would view the whole affair.

After a short conversation with his companions, Big Bear got out of his trap. Had they been seen in the bright moonlight by those hawk eyes? The girls shuddered at the very thought and lay still, hardly daring to breathe!

The tall Indian drew a huge knife and walked straight towards the place where they were hidden. Di's

While they watched, Big Bear calmly broke off a piece of wire from the fence, and going back to the team repaired one of the traces Then he climbed in and drove on.

For a few moments the girls did not move, then they scurried like scared rabbits across the trail and

into the Reserve. Hurriedly they climbed the little hill to the grove of trees, and Di pointed to one.

"That was it. You can see the place where I broke a twig getting up."

"Well, break some more climbing up again," Jeanie said, rather crossly. Now the scare was over she felt tired and snappy. "It's better for you to do it, because you know how the things were arranged," she added more kindly, for she remembered that Di was only a "tenderfoot." She gave her cousin a shoulder up and then handed over the trophies. Di arranged them carefully and then slid down again, more than thankful that Old Big Bear's possessions were returned to him once more!

The two trudged silently back to the farm, without any mishap. The air was much colder now, for dawn was not very far away, and nothing was to be heard but the eerie "Yip-yip-yip!" of a coyote, one of the prairie dogs. Even the owl seemed to be in bed. At long last the girls saw the farm buildings and Jeanie whistled softly to the collies, who kindly forbore to bark. A few minutes later the two adventurers had safely climbed the porch and were in bed once more.

For a few minutes Di lay shivering—partly from cold and partly from the fright she had had—but soon a delicious drowsiness began to steal over her, and the next moment she was fast asleep.

Myrtle and all the other girls in Di's form were greatly impressed with the story of her adventures, and were never tired of hearing the tale of the famous trophies; but sometimes when the dormitory lights were out, and everyone was settling down to slumber, the traveller would wonder if she really were the same girl who had lain trembling among the grain while Young Big Bear flourished his knife!

SUBTERRANEAN SURPRISES

By Ann Veronica Wormleighton

(Edited by A. E. Seymour)

ONE morning I was out for a stroll before brekker with Jessie Warwick, when Patty Benet came running up very excitedly, and said there'd been a fall of rock on Roden Tor that had exposed an opening which she thought might be a cavern. Our school is in Derbyshire, and the limestone hills are so full of subterranean passages and caverns that no one but visitors bothers much about them. Except, of course, the Peak Cavern at Castleton and the Blue John Mine. So Patty's news didn't seem anything special, and Jessie asked, "Why all the excitement?"

So Patty said the opening was behind the clump of ash-trees where we sometimes go to picnic, and she didn't think anyone else had spotted it. She wanted us to go and explore it with her after dinner (it was a halfer) so that we could say we were the first to set foot in it.

I pointed out that the Head mightn't like us to go into a cavern unless it was with a party and a proper guide, but Patty said, "Well, dash it all, we're Guides, aren't we? Why, if you look at it one way, it's a duty!"

So Jessie said, "Talking of Guides, the new Guide Books'll have to describe it and they might have a bit about how it was discovered by three daring girls from Beauchief School."

"They might even put our names!" cried Patty eagerly. "And if we're the first to explore it we can call it Beauchief Cavern after the School."

So we arranged to go directly after dinner, and to cut "DISCOVERED BY" *and our names in the limestone* so that when the reporters came they could write them down.

"We'll print them so *that they'll* get the spelling right," said Patty. "I'd hate to be known to posterity as a common Bennett."

I said, "We shall have those cocky Fifth-formers butting in if we're not careful."

"We must keep it quiet," said Jessie. "I wonder if we could cover up the opening when we've explored

it and keep it a secret between us three? Think what a splendid dug-out it would make if there was another war and they started dropping bombs on the school. Imagine the Head tearing her hair and crying, 'All is lost!'—and then, we quietly taking her aside——"

"Oh yes!" put in Patty ecstatically. "And we'll have a store of candles there all ready for emergencies. We'll call ourselves the Cavern Committee."

"Or the Subterranean Syndicate," went on Jessie. "We could have little badges marked S.S., and no one but us will know what they mean."

Just then the bell went and we had to rush.

After break Jessie and I got detained for talking, so we had to go back at two, but Patty said she wouldn't wait or someone might get there first and that we could join her later.

So I said, "Don't go in far till we come."

And she said, "No fear! I'll take my wood-carving chisel and a bicycle lamp and start cutting the names,"

Well, Miss Hargreaves was fairly decent and let us go at half-past, and we hurried off and got to Roden Tor by about three, and soon found the spot. The opening was about five yards up the slope and was quite small—not much bigger than the trap-door to a coal-hole. There were a lot of loose rocks round the trees, and it looked as though they had fallen from much higher up and had sort of chipped a bit off the side of the cavern.

We shouted to Patty that we'd come, but she didn't answer, so I said, "Looks as though we've got here first."

And then suddenly we heard a dog barking inside the cavern, and Jessie said, "Listen! That's Ginger. I'd know his bark anywhere."

Ginger is Patty's dog and they are always together out of school, so I said, "Well, if Ginger's inside, Patty's there too."

We called "Ginger!" as loud as we could, and sure enough presently he came rushing out and jumped up at us and then dashed in again. Jessie said, "I don't like that. He seems to want us to follow him. I hope that ass of a Patty hasn't gone and got herself hurt."

I felt a bit worried myself, but I said, "Oh, don't start imagining things. Remember, we called him."

Jessie said, "Yes, but why did he come? I've never known him leave Patty. I can only think of one reason: she's hurt and he *had* to leave her to fetch help."

So I said, "If you think that, it's up to us to go and look for her."

"Yes," said Jessie, "that's what I think—and the sooner the better; but we must get another lamp first because it will be pitch-dark in there

except just where she is. Besides! Perhaps her lamp's gone out and she's lost her matches. That would be just like Patty."

It seemed to me that Jessie was taking rather a black view of things, but before I could answer, she pointed to two cyclists who were riding along the Deene Road.

"They'll do!" she cried. "You ask the dirty man and I'll tackle the little fat chap." She raced down and waved her arms, but I didn't hurry because I saw that the dirty man hadn't got a lamp. By the time I got there the little fat man had drawn level with us and dismounted.

"Good afternoon," said Jessie, smiling affably, "we shall be much obliged if you will lend us your lamp."

"My lamp! Whatever for?" said the little fat man, looking very much surprised.

So Jessie said, "A friend of ours has gone into yonder cavern and we greatly fear that some ill has befallen her."

Although I was worried about Patty, I couldn't help smiling to myself. Jessie will put it on so when she's talking to grown-ups.

"So my friend and I are going to the rescue," went on Jessie dramatically.

"Don't do anything so foolish!" said the man, getting very flustered. "Let me fetch the police. Two young girls can't possibly go into a cavern alone."

"We can't wait for the police because our friend is lost in the bowels of the earth and every moment may be of importance," said Jessie. "But, if you like, you can come too."

"Well," said the man, "I think you are very silly girls but if you are set on it, then I must go with you. But I don't like it. It is a very grave responsibility."

"Yes," said Jessie. "But we have been taught never to shirk responsibility. At our school——"

"Unfortunately I don't go to your school," said the man sarcastically. He propped his machine against a rock and lit his lamp and said, "I'll go first."

"Pardon me," said Jessie very politely, "but you must allow us to take the lead because we're going to call the cavern after our school."

"I don't care what you call the beastly thing," said the man. "But if you go first, you must have the lamp," and he handed it to her.

The dirty man must have looked round and seen the light, for he came back and asked, "Anythink wrong?"

"Yes," said Jessie. "A friend of ours is lost in yonder cavern which we are about to explore with the object of rescuing her if she still lives, or recovering the body if the vital spark is extinct."

"Them there places allus smells

funny," said the dirty man, beginning to fill his pipe.

"I mean—" said Jessie, reddening, "if she has unhappily given up the ghost."

"Oh! If there's a ghost, I'll come too," said the dirty man. Jessie whispered to me that he must be half-witted, but we didn't answer him, so he laid his bike on the grass and joined us.

(As we never got to know these two men's names, we always speak of them as the little fat man and the dirty man, so that's what I shall call them here; and if this happens to meet their eyes I hope they will not think me disrespectful.)

Well, we climbed up to the opening and Jessie shone the light in and we could see that there was a drop of about a yard and that, once in, there was room to stand up, so she lowered herself in and then she shone the light for us and we followed. We found ourselves in a sort of crack, about two yards wide at the bottom, and with sloping sides going up to a sharp corner like an isosceles triangle.

"First of all, let's shout again," I said, and we did, but the only answer was a short bark from Ginger.

Jessie turned round to the little fat man and said, "That's our friend's dog."

"Well, I didn't think it was a cat," he replied. "And kindly refrain from shining that lamp in my eyes." He seemed to be gradually getting cross. I expect it was his nerves.

Well, we started off, Jessie leading, and the dirty man coming last. For some distance the passage was fairly straight, then it began to wind first one way and then the other. We kept calling out, but there was no answer but echoes. It was rather eerie.

At last we came to a place where the passage split into two and the little fat man got awfully agitated. He said, "If we once start turning corners, we shall get lost as sure as eggs. We must turn back."

I rather thought the same, but Jessie said, "We are well aware that we carry our lives in our hands, but Beauchief girls never turn back. You can go back if you like, but you'll have to leave us the lamp."

"How can I find my way back in the dark?" asked the little fat man.

"Of course you can't, so we'll get on," said Jessie serenely, and she led the way down the right-hand passage.

The dirty man seemed to be one of the strong, silent sort, for all this time he'd just puffed at his pipe and said nothing—except now and then when he banged his head in the low places. When this happened, Jessie whispered to pretend not to hear, because being so much taller than us, it must be awkward for him.

We hadn't gone far when we came to quite a big cavern with things like

icicles—I think they are called stalactites—hanging from the roof. I should say it was about as big as one of our class-rooms, only wedge-shaped. Jessie asked us to stand at the spot where we'd come in while she hunted round with the lamp, and at last she found what she called a fissure—a sort of narrow gap—in the far corner. We shone the lamp in and found there was a long slope down, so Jessie said to the little fat man, " Now you can go first, if you like." So he looked down it and said, "No, I think you should go first. I am not so sure-footed as you."

As she gave me the lamp to hold, Jessie whispered that she thought the little fat man was an awful coward. Then she clambered through the gap and was just reaching out for the lamp when she disappeared.

" Why, she's gone ! " said the little fat man, very surprised.

Then there was a squeal and an awful sound of slithering and he cried, " Goodness me, what's that ? "

" Don't be alarmed, it's only my friend," I said quietly, for I know how important it is to keep cool in emergencies. I shone the lamp through the opening and I could see Jessie some way down the slope. She was on her knees, rubbing her head.

" Are you much hurt ? " I cried.

" Terribly, but I refuse to give in," replied Jessie, so loudly that I knew she was all right and just wanted the men to admire her spirit.

I gave the little fat man the lamp and got cautiously through the hole and held on to a ledge. Then he started to follow. Jessie had come half-way back to see how we got on and when his head came through she called out excitedly, " Help the little fat man. He might slip ! "

" I don't want any help. I can manage by myself," cried the little fat man testily. He seemed quite cross about something.

" Well, please pass the lamp through first," said Jessie coaxingly. " If you smash that we shall be in a hole."

" Hmph ! " grunted the little fat man, passing me the lamp. " I thought she wasn't worrying about me ! "

And the dirty man laughed and said, " As for bein' in an 'ole, I reckon we're in one a'ready."

Then an awful thing happened. The little fat man got half-way through —then he got stuck. Jessie climbed up to us and held the lamp while I pulled at him, but it was no good.

" Well, I must get back and wait, that's all," said the little fat man in resigned tones. Then he found he couldn't get back.

So Jessie said, " We can't wait here all day. Patty may be lying somewhere with a broken leg," and she shouted to the dirty man to give him a good push, and I suppose he did, for the little fat man gave such an awful " Ough ! " we had to shout

to the dirty man to stop pushing. The little fat man said there was a cornery bit sticking in his ribs and he was sure he couldn't get out till the opening was made bigger.

"But you got in," said Jessie.

"Yes," replied the man. "But what comes of being too fat. We ought to have come alone."

"I wish to goodness you had!" said he fervently. "But it can't be helped now. We must wait till that other man brings help—if he can find his way back in the dark."



"Oh dear!" groaned the little fat man.

all this pushing and pulling has bruised me and made me swell. You must fetch help."

"How can we do that, with you stuck there?" asked Jessie coldly. "You have corked up our only avenue of escape."

"Oh dear!" groaned the little fat man. "This is what comes of doing a kind act."

"Excuse me," said Jessie. "It's

So we shouted to the dirty man to fetch the police as the little fat man was stuck fast, but he shouted back that the police were no good and he'd get some of his mates with picks.

"Can you manage without a light?" bawled Jessie, but there was no answer. He must have started off at once, which was very brave of him, but of course, being a smoker, he'd got matches.

With the opening plugged up we couldn't run away, not if we'd wanted to, so we thought we might as well go on hunting for Patty. So we told the little fat man we'd have to leave him and he was to keep up his spirits and try and look on the bright side of things.

"It's a bit thick to tell him that and then go off with the lamp," I said as we started off. "He's taking it rather well."

"Yes," agreed Jessie. "He's not such a coward as I thought, but I like the dirty man best. I'm sorry I called him half-witted."

At the bottom of the slope the path turned to the left and began to go up and then turned left again. I said, "I'm sorry about the little fat man."

"So am I," said Jessie. "This lamp isn't as bright as it was and I forgot to ask him how it works."

It was an acetylene lamp. Jessie fiddled with it a bit and suddenly it went lower still, and I thought it was going out altogether, but it didn't quite.

"I fear that our fate is sealed!" said Jessie with great gusto. "Years hence some explorer will stumble o'er our whitening skeletons."

"Well, he'll get what-for if he stumbles over mine!" I said. I felt a bit worried, but I wasn't going to let Jessie put me in a panic.

We pushed on faster and presently Jessie, who was still leading, called out, "Hullo! Here's another of those big caverns."

I'd just got to the entrance when she gave a gasp and jumped back, nearly knocking me over.

"Whatever's the matter?" I asked, but she only said, "Sh!" and dragged me back into the passage. Then she put her lips to my ear and hissed, "*I saw something moving!*"

"Perhaps it's Patty," I said.

"I'm sure it's not!" said Jessie. "It's some awful denizen of the underworld!"

"What did it look like?" I asked.

"An oculist—I mean, an octopus," said Jessie, in a horrified whisper.

"But octopuses live in the sea," I objected.

"Well, it's got long, waving tentacles, anyway," said Jessie, shuddering. "I expect it's one of those awful great lizards that everyone thinks are extinct. A Brontosaurus, perhaps, or an Iguanodon."

"Well, there's one consolation—they were vegetarians," I said. I can tell you I didn't feel like joking, but I didn't want Jessie to see how scared I was.

Suddenly she grabbed my arm and gasped, "*Listen! It's growling!*"

We listened for a bit and there certainly was a sort of buzzing sound.

"I can't make it out," whispered Jessie presently. "It seems to be growling a tune!"

We went a bit nearer and there was no doubt about it.

"Why, it's Tipperary!" I cried. "It must be Patty. Flash the lamp that way."

So Jessie held up the lamp but no Patty appeared, and then I saw the waving tentacles. It gave me an awful shock for a moment before I realised that they were the little fat man's legs waggling to the music. I suppose he was singing to keep up his courage. We'd come back to the old spot by another way.

"Thank goodness for that!" cried Jessie. "We know the way out from here. Come on before this rotten lamp goes out altogether. We must give the alarm." So without waiting to comfort the little fat man we hurried off down the passage, and when we turned into the straight bit we saw a light bobbing about and who should we find but Patty with her lamp in one hand and a chisel in the other.

"Well, I'll be *jiggered!*" exclaimed Jessie.

"Thank goodness it's *only you!*" cried Patty. "I wondered who on earth—or, rather, under the earth—was coming."



"I saw something moving!" she hissed.

"What have you been doing?" demanded Jessie crossly.

For answer, Patty shone her lamp on the rocky wall. She had been carving the names and had got as far as:

DISCOVERED BY
P. BENET
J. WARWICK
A. WOR

" I see you've put your own name first," said Jessie.

" Naturally," replied Patty, starting on the next letter.

" Well, you can jolly well cross it out then," said Jessie. " We've explored for miles, thinking you were lost inside. You've done nothing."

" Yes I have, then ! " said Patty. " I went as far as that big chamber and then my lamp went wonky so I had to go to the Hotel for some oil. You must have come while I was away."

" You'd no business to go away after what we arranged," said Jessie irritably.

" Oh yeah ! " scoffed Patty, cutting the last stroke of the M. " By the way, did you see anything of Ginger ? "

" Don't forget the little fat man," I reminded Jessie, for it seemed a bit thick to leave him stuck there while we argued with Patty, and she calmly went on carving.

" Yes, that's another thing," said Jessie, pointing an incriminating finger at Patty. " You may be interested to know that through trying to save you, the little fat man—I mean, a gallant gentleman is at present stuck in a hole and will probably die of starvation." And she explained what had happened.

Patty seemed upset at the news and hastily gathered up her things. " Come on then," she cried. " Let's go and get some of the quarrymen. Ginger's in there somewhere too."

So we set off and met the dirty man just coming back with a rescue-party carrying picks and shovels. As Jessie said, he had been "true to his trust."

We were already late for tea so we couldn't wait to see the rescue, but Jessie made them a little speech and said we should never forget their prompt response to our S.O.S., and that we were sure the little fat man would be safe in their hands.

" And while you're at it," said Patty sweetly, " please will you find my dog ? He went in with me and got on the track of a badger or something, and I lost him. You needn't bring him to the school—he knows the way."

I thought it sounded a bit cheeky, but the men all laughed. I think they'd just come from the Waggon and Horses for they were very jovial, and the dirty man said, " Right-o, missie ! We'll get 'em both out if we 'ave to blow up the blinkin' Tor with dynamite."

And get them out they did, though the only blowing-up was done by the Head when she found out where we'd been. Ginger turned up all right before bedtime, but we never saw the little fat man again and I've got his lamp to this day.

We were never able to finish our inscription because the Head put the cavern out of bounds, so if I ever appear in a Guide Book it will be as A. WORM, which is rather a galling thought.

TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND



By F. O. H. Nash

"I HEAR the daffies are out in the woods," Iris Dudden remarked to her chosen friend, Ursula Slade, as the two walked home from school together one Friday afternoon at the end of March.

The girls both lived in the village of Woodington. Mr. Dudden was the Vicar and Ursula's father the doctor, and the two had been friends all their lives.

Mrs. Slade used to say sometimes to her husband, that of course Iris was a dear girl, but she really was a terrible tomboy—as bad as any of her three brothers—and Mrs. Slade would have liked Ursula to see more of Unity Bryant, the only other girl who lived in the neighbourhood.

Iris was fourteen, Ursula thirteen, and Unity twelve and a half, and the three were the only day girls at their school, Woodington Court, which lay half a mile or so out of the village. Unity was the oldest of the trio in some ways, for she had always been a great deal with grown-up people, and had been taken for holidays on the Continent, and cruises to Norway and the West Indies.

Unity was fully aware of her advantages, and rather inclined to "rub them in," which made her

very unpopular at school, and especially with Iris and Ursula, who had never been farther than Cornwall in their lives. This afternoon the Bryants' Daimler, containing Unity and her griffon Albert, passed the other two in the lane, and Unity *vouchsafed* a *condescending* nod as Iris and Ursula stood up against the bank to give the car room to get by.

Mrs. Bryant was quite as anxious as Mrs. Slade that her only child should make friends of her own age, and had suggested to Unity that she should sometimes give her neighbours a lift home, particularly when it was wet, but Unity had firmly crushed this idea.

"No, Mummie, I can't—unless you want the inside of the car spoilt! You know I did ask them to come with me one day, and Ursula would have been all right, but Iris had a jam-jar full of tadpoles, or efts or something disgusting, and she wouldn't leave them behind at school. Of course the water slopped all over the place, and an eft fell out, and Albert nearly ate it, and I thought he'd be poisoned! And Iris fussed about her precious eft, and said Albert was a greedy little beast, and you know what a bother Rouse had to get the mark out of the lining. No, I don't mind Ursula, but she won't leave Iris, and she's not my sort! I like Albert best, and you aren't a greedy little beast, darling!" and Unity kissed the maligned Albert, who licked her face all over in a transport of affection.

Mrs. Bryant said no more, hoping that time might work a miracle in Iris. She had no hope that Unity would change once she had made up *her mind!*

"Let's go and get some to-morrow afternoon," Ursula said, referring to the daffodils. "We shall be able to dodge the keepers and wires and things."

"All right, and we'll take some to Doris. Oh-h! Have you heard Unity's latest?"

"No, what is it?"

"Her mother's a distant cousin of Mrs. Branksome's, so Unity is to go in the woods whenever she likes!"

Ursula chuckled.

"She would be! Never mind, she'll be something else to dodge!"

Until a year before the daffodil woods had belonged to an old lady called Mrs. Curtis, who had allowed anyone from the neighbourhood to go there, provided they did no damage, but unfortunately Mrs. Curtis had died in the previous April and had left the property to a nephew, Major Branksome, who had very different views.

The woods were now strictly preserved, the fences mended, and a small army of keepers patrolled the woods. In addition to all this, wires were cunningly concealed near to the paths and connected with de-

tonators, that would go off with loud bangs when anything touched the wires.

Iris and Ursula called these appliances the man-traps, and the former would remark sarcastically that no doubt the hen pheasants had been warned not to be nervous if anything like a bomb exploded near their nests.

"Otherwise you'd think they might jump up in a hurry and break the eggs or trample on the chicks," she would add innocently.

Of course Ursula and the young Duddens never stopped grumbling about Major Branksome's regulations, but in their secret hearts they felt that a raid on the woods was a thousand times more "worth while" now that it was fraught with so much danger. They did not dare to go often, for there would have been serious trouble at home if they had been caught trespassing, but once or twice every holidays and occasionally in the term, Iris and Ursula—and the boys when they were at home—would make a stealthy expedition into the forbidden country.

There was no match at school the next day, as it was the last Saturday of the term, and they always had taken wild daffodils to Doris, an invalid girl in the village, so it seemed to the two the moment had come for another of these raids.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, dear?" Mrs. Slade asked her daughter when they were having lunch the next day.

"Going to tea with Iris," Ursula said promptly.

"Very well," her mother said, smiling, and ten minutes later she saw Ursula running across the paddock in some of her oldest clothes, and climbing over the fence into the Vicarage lane, where Iris was waiting for her. The two struck across a couple of fields and got into a narrow lane which wound uphill behind Major Branksome's woods, as this lane was well away from the village and was very little used.

"If McTavish sees us (McTavish was the head-keeper) I hope School won't get to hear about it," Ursula said thoughtfully, as the two strolled up the lane between the primrose-covered banks. "It might count against the house," she went on, as Iris looked enquiringly at her, "and Theodora would bite our heads off if we went and messed things up now at the end of term."

The girls at Woodington Court were divided into "houses" and everything in work, play and behaviour counted for or against the house. Iris whistled at the very idea of their wrecking the hopes of House III, and said she hoped that Angus McTavish was having an afternoon off to go to the pictures.

The fence was a wattle one, with a hedge in front, but the girls knew a certain elm-tree which grew on the

top of the bank and could be used as a ladder.

"Here we are," Iris said presently, when they reached this spot. "I'll keep 'cave' while you get over."

Ursula nodded, and gripping the rough trunk she found a foothold and pulled herself up. Then she placed the other foot on an upright of the fence and lowered herself to the ground on the other side. Iris gave a quick glance up and down the lane, and then followed her friend.

It was a lovely early spring afternoon. Primroses were growing everywhere, and the trees and bushes were full of the rustling of birds that were busy building nests, or finding food for sitting mates, if the nests were already built and the eggs laid. Tits, that never seem too busy to sing even on a March afternoon, were answering each other from some trees a little farther into the wood, and the girls stole nearer to try and see them.

The daffodils grew a quarter of a mile away, in a place where the undergrowth had been cleared from a sunny hillside.

All seemed to be going well with the trespassers when misfortune number one suddenly overtook them! Ursula had turned round for one more look at the tits when she caught sight of a small, white creature stealing through the wood behind them.

"Mike!" she exclaimed in horror.

Yes, Mike her fox-terrier, had managed somehow, in a way known only to his kind, to follow the girls all the way without being seen. Now he came frisking up, trying to pretend that Ursula had left him behind by mistake and would be delighted to see him!

"That's just about torn it!" Iris said rather gloomily, as Ursula caught the culprit and tied her handkerchief to his collar. "But where could the wretch have been when I was keeping 'cave' in the lane? I never saw him!"

"In the ditch, I expect. He's as artful as a monkey. Shall we have to go back, do you think?"

"No," Iris said firmly. "He's fairly good with you generally, and if you keep tight hold of him he can't chase the pheasants. But he's an awful complication!"

The three went on again in silence. Suddenly, there was a rustle of dry leaves and a white scut flashed away towards a thicket in front. Mike broke away from Ursula's hold, and was after the rabbit with one sharp yelp.

"I am sorry!" Ursula looked utterly abashed.

"So you ought to be! Lucky it's only a bunny, but how shall we catch him?"

The thicket was dangerously near to the wires and detonators, and was probably full of sitting pheasants. The girls hurried towards it as

quickly and silently as they could, till Iris, who was leading, uttered a sharp "Hist!" and threw herself on the ground. Ursula also dropped in her tracks.

"What is it?" she whispered, almost under her breath.

"People coming up the path there. I heard voices." And Iris pointed to a track through the wood which wound away down the hillside.

The girls looked anxiously round for some cover. They were in an open space between two thickets, with no undergrowth but only a few oak-trees, which were still leafless that March afternoon. The enemy might appear on the path before they could run to cover. Happily, by some miracle, Mike seemed to have disappeared into the wood without scaring any birds. Long might he remain away!

"That oak's hollow! Quick, let's get inside!" and Ursula ran to an ancient tree that stood near the path and seemed to offer some shelter. She had often climbed it before, in the free old days, and a moment later had swarmed up the trunk and dropped down inside.

Iris followed her and managed to crouch down in the top of the empty trunk. She knew she must be seen if anyone came round the tree, but if the new-comer stayed on the other side she might be safe. She had a peep-hole, which showed her the path, and a moment later a little group of people came in sight. Iris put down her hand and pinched her friend's ear, which was the only part she could reach, as a warning that great danger was at hand. The three people coming up the path were Major Branksome, Mrs. Bryant and Unity!

"This dry spring has been a good time for the birds," the Major was saying, "and now we've managed to keep all the hobble-de-hoys of the neighbourhood from trampling over the place, there's a chance of a good season."

Mrs. Bryant laughed.

"I'm afraid you've had a great deal of trouble since you came. Out of the kindness of her heart dear Mrs. Curtis made things rather hard for you."

The Major gave a short laugh.

"Life is hard enough for landowners in any case! I want to let the shooting well this year to pay for all the expenses of moving in. I can't afford to shoot the place myself. McTavish is full of wonderful contrivances," he added more lightly. "Between ourselves, I think some of his remedies are almost worse than the disease, but he's taken so much trouble that I can't bear to snub any of his plans."

"I wish we could find some people trespassing now and turn them out, it would be fun!" Unity put in. She was not used to being left out of the conversation. At the familiar sound of her shrill little treble, Ursula gave a bounce inside the tree, and

received a severe nip on the ear to keep her quiet.

Major Branksome and Mrs. Bryant both laughed at Unity's remark, and the former said that he would much rather not find anyone on his property.

All this time the little group of three had been standing still on the path near to the hollow oak, and the girls had been in an agony of suspense. At any moment Mike might come rushing out of the wood to jump up at the tree where his friends were hidden, and in any case Unity would recognise him, and catch him to read the name and address on his collar. Or the Major might lead his little party round the tree and see the strange birds roosting there! In either case the results were too awful to contemplate!

How self-righteous Unity would look at the time, and how she would crow afterwards! Mrs. Bryant would of course know them, and feel very much ashamed that they were Woodington Court girls, and the angry Major would rush home to write letters of complaint to Dr. Slade and Mr. Dudden. Even if no official report went to Miss Rignold, the "Head," Unity would take good care that Theodora and all the rest of the school knew about their disgrace.

Ursula and Iris had never passed such an uncomfortable five minutes in their lives!

At last the three began to move on, and were presently lost to view round a bend in the path.

"Phew-w-w!" Iris stretched her cramped limbs and ventured to sit up and look round. All seemed quiet—perhaps Mr. McTavish really had got an afternoon off!—but at any moment the owner might bring his guests back again. "Though it's more likely that he's taking them round and bringing them back down the other side," she remarked to Ursula as she jumped down to the ground. "Let's find this miserable hound of yours, and then get some daffies and streak for home. I shall have palpitations for a month! Are you coming, or have you taken a fancy to that tree?" she asked, for she could hear Ursula wriggling about inside the trunk, though she was still hidden from view.

"I'm stuck!" a muffled voice spoke piteously. "Come and pull me out!"

Iris climbed up again and giggled at the sight of the prisoner who was crimson in the face with her struggles.

"Shall I get Unity to come and help? If I let off a fog-signal I expect she'd come running," chuckled Iris, as she prepared to get a good grip.

"Don't be silly, but get me out!" implored Ursula. "Suppose they came back!"

"We'd have to lie doggo again and hope for luck. Now, put your arms up straight and heave up from the bottom. I'm glad I'm not as

fat as you are! Sticking in a tree like this!" Iris pulled, as well as she could for laughing, for Ursula certainly looked very funny, and the latter made herself as slight as she could, with such good results that she shot up suddenly and nearly knocked Iris off her perch.

The two scrambled to the ground and then got their breath again before starting off to look for Mike. One of Ursula's sleeves was torn and she said she was "scratched to bits"—"Not to mention the damage to my ear," she added coldly, sending Iris off into fresh fits of suppressed laughter.

"Come on! Poor little Mike must be here somewhere!" and Mike's owner cautiously approached the thicket.

The two girls stole hither and thither, softly calling the wanderer by name, and started up one pheasant—a cock that sailed away with his tail streaming out behind. The girls threw themselves down on the ground until the noise of his departure had died away. Luckily it did not seem to attract any attention from the Major or Angus McTavish! Then they went on searching, but there was no sign of the terrier to be seen.

"Perhaps he's gone off home, or—perhaps—McTavish has got him!" Ursula hardly liked to put her real thought into words, but Iris put in quickly:

"I expect he's all right! Anyhow, we haven't heard anything like a shot. What a joke that even the Major doesn't think much of the man-traps and fog-signals!"

"Hush! What was that!" Ursula held up her hand. "There, again! I'm sure I heard Mike whining! There's a rabbit-hole there—several of them. P'r'aps he's got down and can't get out!" She knelt down by a large hole that looked rather scratched about, and whistled softly.

There was an unmistakable whine in answer, which seemed to come from the ground under their feet.

"Mike, you old silly! Come on out," Ursula whispered urgently, but there was only another whine in answer.

"We shall have to dig a bit. He's stuck like you were," laughed Iris. "I never knew such a pair! I shall take Unity and Albert with me next time I go on a spree, and see if they have better luck!"

The girls were scratching away the earth from the hole with the help of sticks and a sharp stone, and before very long Ursula could actually grasp one of Mike's back legs, but when she pulled he only whined and choked in a helpless kind of way.

"I believe his collar is caught," Ursula said, after one or two unsuccessful pulls. They dug for a few minutes longer, and then Ursula was able to unfasten the collar which had caught on a root. The next



"P'r'aps he's got down and can't get out!"

moment poor Mike had scrambled his way out again, and after sundry chokes and sneezes was seized by his mistress who held his mouth to keep him from barking.

"Be quiet! You wretch! Yes, yes, I'm very glad to see you again, but why can't you behave sensibly?" and Ursula picked the rescued one up in her arms and kissed him tenderly.

"This is a very touching scene, but if we're going to get any daffodils perhaps we'd better get a move on. No! You'd better take Mike into the lane and keep him there, and I'll get the daffies!"

This certainly seemed the wisest plan, so Ursula hastily led her pet away towards the tree in the fence and Iris stalked the daffodil ground. She looked for the half-hidden wires near the path and stepped carefully over them. So far so good! She would soon have finished now and be able to join Ursula in the lane.

The daffodils looked very pretty and gay in the sunshine. Iris picked a moderate-sized bunch and then prepared to go.

"I've suddenly remembered that Doris's father is one of the Major's tenants," she thought to herself, making her way carefully from tree to tree, in case anyone was watching from afar. "If Doris had too many in her room *someone* might ask awkward questions!"

She had reached the path now and felt safer, and in that moment of triumph she *forgot* the wires!

Bang! Something like a bomb went off almost at her elbow, making her jump out of her skin, as the saying is, and startling a pheasant that went rocketing away with indignant shrieks, "loud enough to wake the dead," Iris thought. She looked round for some hiding-place, and saw only one — the hollow oak. Hurriedly she scrambled up once more, and then paused before sliding down inside. Supposing she stuck as Ursula had done? How would she ever get out again without help? Then her quick ear caught a sound that made her slip down out of sight. Whatever happened afterwards she must hide now!

Men's footsteps were coming from two directions, and a few seconds later she heard the voice of Mr. McTavish speaking to one of his men.

"Have ye seen anyone, Perkins?"

"No, Mr. McTavish. I'm thinking maybe it was only a rabbit that set the wires going."

"Maybe it was, and again maybe it wasn't!" Angus said, rather grimly. "You go that way down the hill and I'll take a turn round by the lane." The two men went off again, and Iris almost groaned aloud. Was she ever going to escape from this wretched tree?

The whole expedition had begun to look very differently since she had overheard Major Branksome's

remarks to Mrs. Bryant. She and Ursula had always thought that the Major was shutting up his woods from sheer "grumpiness," but now it seemed that he was nursing up his shooting so as to be able to sell it for a good sum and pay some big bills. He was only like a farmer or a market gardener who had to keep his things from being spoilt because he needed to sell them. Suddenly this raid on the daffodils seemed rather mean and caddish!

"We'll never come again, once we can get away!" Iris thought, as she clasped her flowers, and waited as patiently as she could for McTavish to make his round by the lane and go away again. It had been a quarter to four when she first slipped down inside the trunk, "Which may be my grave like the poor girl in the mistletoe-bough story," reflected the prisoner, for putting her thoughts into good English was never Iris's strong point—"I'll wait till five-past four and then see if I can get out."

The time passed very slowly, but at last it seemed safe to make a move. To Iris's great relief she found that she had not stuck, and in a moment she was on the ground. Cautiously she stole towards the lane, past the place where the tits had been singing, and reached the tree in the fence without any further adventure.

"Here you are at last!" Ursula said, with great relief, as her friend's tawny head appeared above the fence. "I nearly had a fit when I heard that bang. Was it you?"

Iris chuckled gaily, and explained what had happened.

"Lucky they thought it was a rabbit," she added. "But never again! Come on, let's take these to Doris as quickly as we can."

The three, for Mike was still with them, ran down the lane and then cut across some meadows and on to the main road, where Doris lived. Poor Doris had had an accident when she was only five and had been on her back ever since, and Iris and Ursula often went to see her. The cottage stood back from the road, behind a high hedge, and this afternoon a man's bicycle was standing by the gate when the girls got there. They opened the gate and came face to face with Major Branksome.

Ursula and Iris stopped dead and felt themselves getting crimson. They were off Tom Tiddler's ground at last, but the wild daffodils told their own tale. The Major took off his hat politely, and looked at them with something very like a twinkle of amusement.

"Good afternoon," he said. "You're going to see Doris and take her some flowers, I see."

Iris found her tongue first.

"Yes," she said shyly. Then she made a brave effort and went on. "These are your daffodils, but I don't think we did the pheasants

any harm. We always do take some to Doris every year, and we didn't understand—we didn't know——!" Here she stopped, feeling more uncomfortable than ever, for how could she tell Major Branksome that they had overheard his private conversation with Mrs. Bryant? Unexpectedly he helped her out.

They must go and see Doris before she started her tea. They found her flushed with excitement and full of a wonderful piece of news.

"Thank you ever so!" Doris beamed at the sight of the daffodils and buried her face among them. "I am so glad you've come now, for I've got some news to tell you.



The wild daffodils told their own tale.

"I don't mind you two in my woods, for I'm sure you would be very careful of the dicky-birds," he said good-humouredly. Then, as the girls stammered their thanks, he gave a friendly nod and was gone. The two looked at each other in amazement, but the subject was too strange and thrilling to be discussed then.

Last week a London doctor was staying with Major and Mrs. Branksome, and they brought him to see me. And the Major's just been to say that I'm to go to London next week, and the doctor thinks he'll be able to cure me! And perhaps next year I'll be able to go after the daffodils myself!"

The Grey Shadow

A Tale of the Forty-Five

BY C. BERNARD RUTLEY

"WELL?"

The speaker was a tall, slender girl with an unruly mass of auburn curls and two eyes of the deepest blue which could yet flash like twin swords of tempered steel when their owner's anger was aroused. But at the moment there was more anxiety than anger in the speaker's eyes as she stood facing the grey-haired old man seated in the chair before her.

"Well?" A note of impatience crept into the girl's voice. "What ails you, Grandfather? Have you no voice? What did Sir Hubert Massington say?"

"Nought of any good, Josselyn," answered the old man at last, and his voice shook with fatigue, and something which sounded very much akin to despair. "I spoke him fair, pointing out Geoffrey's youth and hot-headed ardour, but the scoundrel laughed in my face. 'Twas the opportunity he had been seeking all his life,' he told me. You know, lass, how for generations there has been enmity between the Carews and the Massingtons, and I do fear that it is his intention to use this opportunity to stamp out the last of the Carews, and as a reward for his treachery to claim what little remains to us of our once-wide inheritance."

"Stamp out ——" The girl checked the cry of fear upon her lips, and by a great effort of will forced herself to keep calm. "So Sir Hubert has the letter?" she asked in a flat, colourless voice.

"Yes, lass, he has the letter. The dog read it to me, flaunted it in the face of an old man."

"And it——"

The speaker's voice failed her, but there was no mistaking the question in her eyes.

"Yes, Josselyn, it is even worse than I had feared," continued the old man. "It speaks of 'my trusted Messenger, Geoffrey Carew,' and bears Charles's own signature, and to make matters worse the Prince adds that Geoffrey has performed many similar services for him, and has brought many followers to his flag. 'Tis in truth, child, as damning a letter as could be written."

"So there would be no hope. Once that letter reaches——"

Again anxiety choked the girl's utterance, but her grandfather understood the unfinished question.

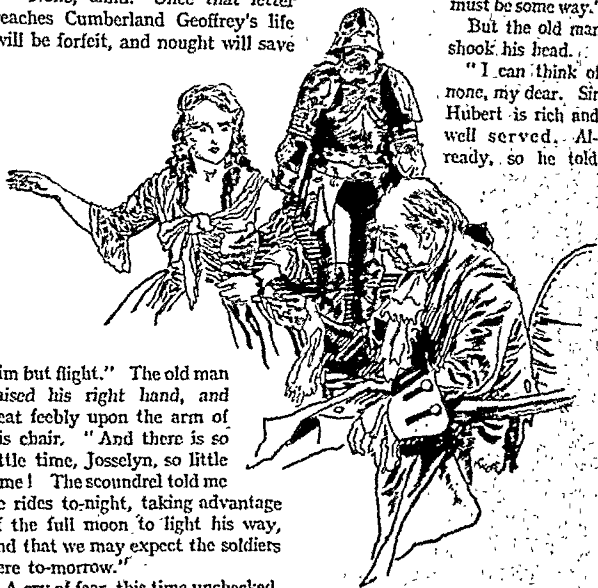
"None, child. Once that letter reaches Cumberland Geoffrey's life will be forfeit, and nought will save him but flight." The old man raised his right hand, and beat feebly upon the arm of his chair. "And there is so little time, Josselyn, so little time! The scoundrel told me he rides to-night, taking advantage of the full moon to light his way, and that we may expect the soldiers here to-morrow."

A cry of fear, this time unchecked, escaped from the girl's white lips.

"To-morrow! And Geoffrey lies upstairs, wounded and unconscious. Grandad, we must do something, we must, we must! We cannot let them take Geoffrey. Why, he is but a boy, younger than me by a year; yet if they should take him they will hang him, hang him, my brother, and the last Carew of them all. Think, Grandad, think! There must be some way."

But the old man shook his head.

"I can think of none, my dear. Sir Hubert is rich and well served. Already, so he told me, he has men watching to see that we make no attempt to carry Geoffrey away, even had we the friends to aid us, and with that letter——" The speaker reached out a hand, and took one of the



"And there is so little time, Josselyn."

girl's in his. "My dear," he went on, "let us face this like Carews. Geoffrey has been acting as confidential messenger for Charles Stuart, and a letter bearing his name has come into Sir Hubert's possession. And now the Prince is in full flight, and Sir Hubert intends to take the letter to the Duke of Cumberland, and when that has been done Geoffrey will be branded as a rebel, and his life forfeit. Were I younger, Josselyn, I might accomplish something, but even the short journey to Sir Hubert's house has exhausted me, and eighty years is no age for knight-errantry, however willing the heart. I am as grieved as you, and——"

"I know, Grandad." The girl sat down on the arm of the old man's chair, and put an arm round his neck. "You have already done your share and more, and if the worst should come, then indeed we will face it like Carews. But that letter, Gran? Without that letter, would Sir Hubert be powerless to harm?"

"Powerless?" The old man repeated the word as though the thought were new to him. "Aye, I think so. His case rests on that letter, and without it he would have no proof of Geoffrey's connection with the Prince. But what is your thought, Josselyn?"

Suddenly the old man gripped the girl's nearer arm, and a look of determination crept into the wrinkled face. "Hearken, girl, you shall not go begging to that scoundrel. Not even to save my grandson shall a daughter of the Carews demean herself before an upstart Massington."

The girl laughed.

"I am not going a-begging, Grandad, so have no fear. 'Twould be useless if I did, for Sir Hubert likes me as little as he loves Geoffrey. No, I did but wonder." She rose from the arm of the chair, and laid a gentle hand upon the old man's head. "Don't worry, Grandad," she went on. "I'm going away now to think of some plan. You know I'm clever at plans, Gran, and somehow I feel that Geoffrey will not suffer for his foolishness after all."

The old man nodded his head, already half asleep in his chair.

"Foolishness, Josselyn. Aye, foolishness, but yet what glorious foolishness. Had the Prince won ——"

The old head fell back, and the girl gently arranged a cushion to take its weight; then crept away on tiptoe, a smile upon her lips. Foolishness. She wished as ardently as any supporter of the exiled Stuarts that the handsome young Prince, who had risked everything on a single throw, had won back the throne of his ancestors, but her practical young mind told her that the attempt had been foolishness, though glorious foolishness indeed.

And now she had to think of some more such foolishness, for only by such foolishness as gallant Prince Charlie had shown could she hope to save her beloved brother from the fate which awaited him once Sir Hubert had delivered that fateful letter. But what? How? The smile faded from the girl's lips as she realised the difficulties before her. She a girl, alone and unaided, what foolishness could give her victory over a grown man, rich and unscrupulous, and with many friends? She closed the door of the room silently behind her, and was instantly pounced upon by a young serving-maid all a-twitter with excitement.

"Why, Mercy, whatever is the matter?" asked the girl.

"Oh! Mistress Josselyn, haven't you heard the news? 'Tis the Grey Shadow again. He held up Lady Bathhurst's coach last evening, and robbed her of her jewels. Never was there such a daring rogue. Her ladyship's jewels, they say, are worth a mort of money, and he has got them all, and Lord Bathhurst has sent for some soldiers to hunt down the wretch. Oh! I'm sure I shall be afraid to go out o' nights until the ruffian is caught."

Josselyn laughed.

"Fear not, Mercy, the Grey Shadow goes after bigger game than you. Now run away, girl, and get on with your tasks. For myself I almost hope the poor man gets away, though to be sure 'twas a foolish thing to rob my Lady Bathhurst."

She turned up the stairs towards the room where her brother lay wounded and unconscious in the care of an old woman who had nursed them both. The Grey Shadow. Foolishness! The girl's eyes suddenly began to glitter like blue-bladed swords. Foolishness indeed, utter, utter foolishness, and yet—— She opened the door of the sick boy's room, and crept quietly to the bedside. He was still unconscious, and a bandage, swathing his chest, showed where the enemy's bullet had entered. 'Twas a miracle he had escaped death, to move him would certainly complete what the bullet had begun. Josselyn's red lips grew firm with determination, and with a nod to the old woman by the bedside she tiptoed out of the room. Foolishness. Glorious foolishness, such as had urged forward the bonnie Prince and brought her brother to this sad pass, was their only hope.

* * *

Sir Hubert Massington was at peace with the world, so far as one of his hard, unscrupulous nature could be at peace. The night was fine, a brilliant moon shone in the sky, his horse was fresh and strong, and in the pocket of his coat he carried a letter which was like to bring the last of the Carews to the scaffold.

He had always hated the Carews, as his father had hated them before him, and his grandfather. For there had been Carews at Carew Court for four hundred years, whilst the Massingtons were mere upstarts with but a generation or two of gentility between them and the soil from which they had sprung.

Perhaps that was why the Massingtons had had the better of the feud which had been waged between the two families for the last eighty years, and had prospered when the Carews had fallen upon lean times, so that in one way or another the Massingtons had obtained possession of much of the land which had once belonged to their rivals. And now he held a weapon which would give him final victory, and should, if he played his cards aright, gain him possession of the few remaining acres which were all that remained to the Carews of their once-broad lands.

No wonder Sir Hubert smiled, and his smile broadened as he thought of the means by which he had gained possession of that precious letter. The fools thought the soldiers had shot the boy, but it had been his own hired ruffian who had sped the bullet from behind a convenient gorse bush, and had then brought him the letter. He had guessed what was going on, and that letter had proved his guess right, and now——

His horse, shying violently, broke the train of Sir Hubert's pleasant thoughts, and with a curse and a savage tug on the bridle he checked the frightened beast. What had scared the animal?

They were crossing a lonely heath, and were passing a solitary clump of trees which cast a dense shadow across the track. Sir Hubert was no coward, but he cast a glance of apprehension at the trees, trying to pierce the shadows with his eyes. 'Twas a nasty place, such a place as —— The man's thoughts stopped short. Was he mistaken, or had something moved in the blackness of the shadow? His hand stole towards the big horse-pistol resting in its saddle holster, but he was a second too late, and before he could grasp the protruding butt a horse and rider had emerged from the blackness, and a voice was sternly commanding him to stand and deliver.

Sir Hubert cursed roundly, but there was no disregarding the threat of the long, black barrel within a foot of his head, and at the command of the unknown he raised his hands above his head.

Out of the corners of his eyes, Sir Hubert appraised his antagonist. A shaft of moonlight, penetrating through the tree-tops, showed him a tall, slender figure swathed in a long, grey riding-cloak, with grey hat and mask to match, and seated on a great, grey horse. The Grey Shadow

himself. A murrain on the fellow! Couldn't he be content with Lady Bathhurst's jewels.

When he had heard of Lady Bathhurst's loss, Sir Hubert had laughed, and wished the bold robber safe escape with the old harridan's treasures; now he swore that once out of this predicament he would not rest until the Grey Shadow was in jail. Not that he had much to

The Grey Shadow was backing his horse, until he was behind Sir Hubert and outside his victim's vision unless he turned his head.

"Do not move."

Again Sir Hubert was struck by the artificiality in the voice, but he had no time to pursue his thought before he felt a hard, round muzzle pressed firmly against the back of his head.



His hand stole towards the big horse-pistol.

lose. Some gold pieces, a watch. Aloud he said:

"What want you, man? I am no old dame to carry diamonds and rubies about with me, and I warn you——"

"Silence!"

The voice was gruff; yet there was a strange quality of unrealness about it which set Sir Hubert wondering. It did not seem to go with that slender figure. It——

"My finger is heavy upon the trigger these days, Sir Hubert Massington," went on the voice (so the dog knew his name), "and even a slight jerk of your head might cause my pistol to go off, so I would advise you to be still and to obey. Not that I should regret your demise, Sir Hubert. I am a rogue and a robber, but if all I have heard of you is true you are still the greater villain. And keep a quiet tongue. Swearing

and hard words always make my trigger-finger tremble. Now, Sir Hubert, lower your right arm. Lower your arm, you dog! So. Unbutton your coat. No tricks."

The muzzle of the pistol, boring into the back of his head, warned Sir Hubert of the futility of resistance, and with a smothered oath he proceeded to obey. "That is good. Now slip your right arm out of its sleeve, and raise it again above your head. 'Tis well you do obey!" Again the pressure of the pistol warned the infuriated man that he was at the mercy of his antagonist.

"Now lower your left arm, and slip it out of its sleeve. Quick!" as Sir Hubert hesitated. What did the man want with his coat? The coat held the precious letter; yet, if he tried to remove it, that pistol, which pressed so unpleasantly against his head, might go off. Still the dog could know nothing of the letter, or use it were he aware of its existence. 'Twas gold and jewels he was seeking, and doubtless after he had pilfered the pockets of their few valuables he would return the coat.

And then—— With a bad grace Sir Hubert surrendered his coat. "Thank you, Sir Hubert." A hand reached forward, and plucking the two long pistols, which hung on either side of Sir Hubert's saddle, from their holsters, flung them far away across the heath. "Merely a precaution, Sir Hubert. Now I am backing my horse, but do not move. You may have heard that the Grey Shadow is a good shot, and the light is excellent, so keep still, Sir Hubert, if you would ever see Massington Towers again."

The sound of a horse being backed reached Sir Hubert's ears, but he made no attempt to turn. For the moment his thoughts were concentrated on the Grey Shadow's voice. There was something queer about that voice. It sounded different every time the rogue spoke, and once he could have sworn it was a woman speaking. A woman! Jove! That voice didn't belong to a man at all; it was a woman's voice disguised, and the Grey Shadow——

With a violent oath, Sir Hubert dropped his hands, and, grasping the bridle, pulled his horse savagely round. He half expected to hear the crash of a pistol, but no report came; then, as he swung round, he became aware of the sound of pounding hoofs, and saw the Grey Shadow speeding away into the night.

For a moment Sir Hubert sat irresolute in his saddle; the next, realisation of what was happening came to him, and he drove his spurs deep into his horse's flanks, urging it into a headlong gallop. The dog, man or woman Sir Hubert cared not which, was riding away with his coat, and in the pocket of that coat rested the all-important letter which was to complete his fortunes. Again

he cursed roundly; then, realising that he was wasting breath, he fell silent, and concentrated his attention on overtaking the shadowy rider in front.

A hundred yards ahead, Josselyn Carew urged the big, grey horse forward by whispered word and touch of unspurred heel. Across the saddle in front of her lay Sir Hubert's coat, and her right hand grasped the precious letter. If only she had had courage enough to shoot the scheming villain. He deserved it a hundred times and yet—— Bitterly she reproached herself. For Geoffrey's sake she should have done it, beating down her own womanly repulsion at such a deed. But she had failed, and now Geoffrey's life and her happiness depended upon the speed of the big, grey horse she bestrode. If she could outride Sir Hubert, all would be well, but if he overtook her——

The girl stole a glance at the letter. It was written in a bold, flowing hand, and she could read it easily in the light of the full moon. "This by the hand of my trusted Messenger, Geoffrey Carew." The words, with their big, sprawling capitals, stood out like letters of fire, burning themselves into the girl's brain. Swiftly she scanned the rest of the letter. It was as her grandfather had said, and though Geoffrey's name was only mentioned once the letter would surely send him to the scaffold did it fall into the hands of his enemies.

Josselyn glanced back over her shoulder. She was holding her own but nothing more. She would never outride Sir Hubert. She must destroy the letter, but how? No time to burn it. Gripping the letter in her left hand, with her right she ripped off one corner, and began to tear it into tiny pieces, letting them fall one by one from her hand as she galloped through the night. She would rather have burned it, but——

A loud shout from Sir Hubert distracted the girl's attention; the next moment she became aware of other sounds, and glancing up saw a clump of horsemen emerge from behind some trees, and come galloping rapidly towards them. For a second she wondered if help was at hand; then she realised that the newcomers were soldiers, the soldiers who had been sent at Lord Bathhurst's request to hunt down the Grey Shadow, and that she was riding right into their midst.

Quickly she thrust the letter back into the pocket of Sir Hubert's coat, and, jerking the bridle, pulled the great horse round. She knew she could not escape, but if she could only gain time—— Someone shouted to her to stop, but she took no notice; then a pistol cracked, and Josselyn felt the horse stagger under her, and the next instant the poor animal lurched forward on to

its knees, flinging the girl over its head on to the hard ground.

* * *

Josselyn opened her eyes to find herself lying in a derelict barn. Gathered around her were several soldiers, two of whom held lighted lanterns, by the dim glow of which the girl was aware of Sir Hubert standing at her feet, and of a stern-faced officer who knelt beside her, and supported her on one arm.

"She comes round," said the officer as Josselyn stirred in his arm; then, as she sat up, he went on: "Are you better, mistress? That is good. Now perhaps you will tell me who you are, and why you are masquerading in this borrowed gear?"

"Masquerading! Faugh!" broke in Sir Hubert stormily. "I tell you she is the Grey Shadow, and that——"

"Pardon me, Sir Hubert, but that



The poor animal lurched forward on to its knees.

is nonsense," interrupted the officer brusquely. "The Grey Shadow we took five hours ago with all Lady Bathhurst's jewels upon him, so of a certainty this is not he, indeed it looks to me more like a girlish prank than anything else."

"A girlish prank! Are you mad? Is it a girlish prank to hold me up, and rob me of my coat in the middle of the night, and threaten me——"

The speaker became aware of covert smiles on the faces of the men around him, and realised that they were laughing at him for being held up by a mere slip of a girl. With a fierce oath he went on.

"Aye, laugh now, but the time will come when you will laugh in a different fashion. I tell you there is treachery afoot. This girl is Mistress Carew, and she was after a letter I was carrying, a letter with which I can prove that her brother——"

"A letter! Ah! now we are getting at things," put in the officer, and with sick apprehension in her heart Josselyn saw him pick up Sir Hubert's coat from where it lay on the ground beside her.

"'Twill be in this coat, I vow. No, Sir Hubert," as the baronet made a snatch at the coat, "be not so hasty. From your manner it would almost seem you did not wish me to see the letter. Here it is. Hold the lantern nearer, Smythe. 'By the hand of my trusted——'"

His voice ceased, and in silence he read the letter through, whilst Sir Hubert glowered truculently at him, and Josselyn lay back, her head aching, her whole mind and body sick with paralysing fear for the beloved brother she had tried so hard to save. Now the officer was speaking again.

"An incriminating letter, indeed, Sir Hubert," he said, "yet it lacks one most important part. The name of the man to whom it is addressed is missing. See, it has been torn away, all but a capital M. 'My trusted M——' it reads, and if I remember rightly the name of Mistress Carew's brother is Geoffrey. What say you to that, Sir Hubert Massington? By the way, your name begins with an M. 'My trusted Massington,' 'twould fit well into this space. Might it not be, Sir Hubert that you were rather careless in your tearing? That you meant to tear the whole name away, and then incriminate this lady's brother? I am from these parts, and 'tis well known that the Massingtons have never loved the Carews, and this letter——"

"You *mazed* fool," burst out Sir Hubert in violent expostulation, "d'you think that I——"

He paused, for he had intercepted a glance between the officer and his men; the next moment he had struck down the man nearest to him with his clenched fist, and was making for the door. With shouts, the

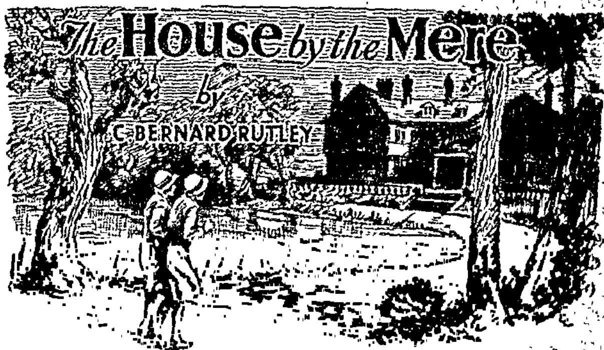
soldiers turned to close with him, but their numbers impeded them in the narrow space, and before the foremost could reach the horses outside, Sir Hubert was on the back of his steed, and was galloping away into the night.

"After him!" shouted the officer. "Smythe, take command, I must remain with this lady."

Alone with Josselyn in the barn, Captain Thomas Miles looked at the girl who had risen to her feet. There was a smile upon his face, a smile which took much of the sternness from his features.

"I am from these parts, Mistress Carew," he repeated, "and I know something of Sir Hubert. A cruel man, and, pardon if I speak plainly, despite all mistakes I think the Carews the better stock. My men ride tired horses, and will not overtake Sir Hubert, so doubtless he will make good his escape abroad, and once there I think this letter will keep him in exile for many years to come. Strange, though, he should so lose his head. My masters, I think, would look upon his behaviour as a confession of guilt, as no doubt Sir Hubert is now most bitterly realising. And now, mistress, I will see you home, and, if you will take the advice of a man old enough to be your father, masquerade no more in robber's guise. Once," he smiled, "we may pass over as a girlish prank, twice——" He looked up at the sky. "'Twill rain soon." He stowed the incriminating letter away in an inner pocket. "I must keep the rest of this letter from getting wet," he remarked indifferently.

In after years, when a strong, hale Geoffrey was master of Carew Court, and Sir Hubert Massington was still an exile abroad, Josselyn often wondered what Captain Thomas Miles had meant by those last words of his. Did he guess that she had torn the letter, that some other name than Sir Hubert Massington's lay in tiny scraps of paper scattered over the broad heath, and, guessing so, had he purposely frightened Sir Hubert into taking incriminating flight? Perhaps. But those were riddles only Captain Thomas Miles could solve, and he never spoke.



"LOOK, Vyvien, there's Anna, whatever is she doing here?"

The speaker, Jean Attwood, stopped her car, and pointed towards a tall pretty girl who had just emerged from the little country station. The three girls had been school-friends at St. Margaret's which they had left together at the end of the previous term, and the last place Jean and Vyvien had expected to meet Anna was in the little Norfolk village where Vyvien was spending October with Jean whose parents had gone abroad.

"Cooee! Anna! Anna!"

Jean leant out of the car, and called to her friend; then, as the other looked round, she waved her hand.

"Hullo, Anna, wherever have you sprung from?" asked Jean as the girl approached the car. "We thought you were in Cornwall."

"So I was, darlings," answered Anna, smiling broadly at her friends, "until I became an heiress; after that I couldn't rest until I had seen my estate, so I left Mother at Sennen, dashed up to town, and here I am."

"An heiress!" exclaimed both her hearers together. "But, Anna beloved, whatever have you been made an heiress to?"

"A house, my dears. A big old country mansion standing in its own grounds, with a lake in front of it, and——"

"Not the House by the Mere?" interrupted Jean.

"Yes, the House by the Mere," replied Anna. "Do you—but of course you know it, you live here. But what's wrong with the place? Why did your voice sound so queer, Jean?"

"Oh! nothing. The place has been empty so long that I was

surprised. That's all. Silly of me. You're going there now, I suppose? Who's meeting you?"

"The agent from Norwich. The place has been left to me by Dad's eldest brother, George. He lived abroad for the last forty years, and now the old chap has pegged out, and left me the ancestral hall. I tell you what, girls, come along with me, and let's explore the place together."

"Can't be done, Anna, sorry," answered Jean, shaking her head. "I've an appointment in Norwich at two, to have my hair done, and I mustn't be late. Tell you what though. Vyv and I will be home to tea, so when you've finished with your house come along to my place, and we'll feed together. Anyone will tell you how to find 'The Beeches.' Get there as soon as you like, and tell Mrs. May, she's our housekeeper, that I sent you, and that you're staying a long, long time. That's an idea, Anna! Stay a day or two. Mother and Daddy are away, and Vyv and I would love to have you. . . . Yes you will. You can 'phone, and say you won't be home. I can fix you up with things. That's settled. Now I must rustle. Your house is a mile down the road. See you at tea. Cheerio!"

* * *

"Just what is wrong with the House by the Mere?"

For five minutes Jean had driven in silence, and then Vyvien broke in upon her thoughts.

"Wrong! Why should anything be wrong?"

"Because when Anna said she had been left the House by the Mere you were badly startled, and I want to know why."

"I can't tell you for certain, Vyv, but there are strange tales about the place. Think of it. For forty years it has been empty. They say that George Strangeways' young wife died there within six months of their marriage, and that the house is just as she left it. Then it's supposed to be riddled with secret passages, and to be haunted. It looks haunted, too. None of the villagers will enter the grounds after dark. They say that people who go in never come back, and it's true that a boy did disappear about two years ago. The police said that he ran away to sea, but the boy's friends swear that he went into the house, and never came out again. That's why I was startled when Anna said she had been left the House by the Mere. Still, she can't come to any harm whilst the agent is with her."

* * *

Jean had had her hair waved, and the hall clock was striking five when she and Vyvien arrived home from Norwich.

"Has Miss Strangeways arrived?"

asked Jean of the maid who opened the door.

"Miss Strangeways," repeated the maid. "No, Miss Jean, no one has called this afternoon."

"All right, Clara. We will have tea at once."

She led the way into the drawing-room, and when she turned to face her friend, Vyvien saw that her face was white and strained.

"Oh, Jean," cried Vyvien, "don't be an ass! Anna's been delayed, that's all. There's *nothing* to be scared about."

"I *know*. Silly of me, but I've been thinking about that wretched house all the afternoon, and finding that Anna hadn't arrived gave me a shock. I expect you're right, and she'll come along soon. Anyway, we'll have tea."

But they finished tea, and still there was no sign of Anna. Jean fidgeted about, going to the front door every few minutes to look out, and presently Vyvien heard her in the study ringing up someone on the telephone. Vyvien listened. She heard the murmur of Jean's voice, followed by a startled exclamation, and the sound of hurried questions; then came a crash as the receiver was dropped on to the table, followed by the thud of flying footsteps across the hall. The next moment Jean burst in upon her friend.

"Vyv," she cried, "something has happened! I've been speaking to the agent at Norwich. He was starting to come over here this afternoon when he fell and hurt his ankle, so he sent his clerk instead. But there was some delay, and the clerk didn't reach the house till three o'clock, and when he arrived there was *no one there*, so after waiting about outside a bit he went home again. Of course Anna hadn't a key, but you know what she is. When the agent didn't turn up, she got into that house somehow or other by herself, and I don't believe *she ever came out*. If she did, why didn't she come to tea as she promised?"

"I don't know, Jean," replied Vyvien. "But what are we going to do? Search the house?"

Jean nodded.

"We must. We will try to get help from the village if you like," she continued doubtfully, "but nobody will come. You see it's already almost dark, and you've no idea how superstitious the country people are in this part of the world. Besides, it's a long way to the village, and we'll save time by going alone, if you're game?"

"Of course I'm game!" replied Vyvien, jumping to her feet. "Let's get torches, and start at once."

Five minutes later the friends were tramping along the darkening country road towards the House by the Mere. They were silent at first.

but presently Vyvien asked Jean if she really thought the house was haunted.

"Of course not, Vyv!" answered Jean. "There's supposed to be an underground passage leading from the house to Dead Man's Creek a mile away, but the ghost part is all rot. It must be!"

Vyvien privately thought that Jean did not sound any too convinced on the point, but she made no comment, and nothing more was said until the girls came to a pair of rusty iron gates standing between two tall, stone gate-posts. The gates were locked, but a postern on one side stood ajar, and passing through the girls found themselves in a weed-grown drive bordered with great, overhanging trees and huge hydrangea bushes, the great blue flowers of which shone like ghostly globes in the last pale beams of light. For a hundred yards the drive stretched straight ahead before it curved round the shore of a dark lake, beyond which stood a large house, gloomy and forbidding, and for some seconds the girls hesitated, daunted, in spite of themselves, by the utter desolation of the scene; then, with an impatient, "Come along, let's get it over!" Jean started up the drive.

On nearer approach the house looked even more sinister than from a distance. The grimy, shuttered windows seemed to regard the intruders malevolently, and the steps leading up to the great front door were covered with a horrid growth of mildew and fungi. Jean gazed at them, her nose wrinkling with disgust. Anna had never entered that way, that was certain, and the shuttered windows were equally impracticable. If she had entered that horrible house she must have done so from the back, and, with a sign to Vyvien, Jean led the way silently round to the rear of the gloomy building. There the same empty desolation greeted them, and they had examined nearly the whole of the back premises without result, when Vyvien suddenly gripped hold of Jean's arm, and pointed to a small square of greater darkness in the gloom before them.

"Look, Jean," she whispered, "there's an open window." She stepped closer, and flashed her torch over the earth beneath the window. "And there are the prints of Anna's feet," she went on, as the light showed up two deep impressions in the soft soil. "There's no doubt about it, Jean, Anna went in through that window, those footmarks prove that."

Jean stepped closer, and peered at the footprints.

"They prove something else also, Vyv," she said seriously. "There is only one set of prints. Anna went in, but she hasn't come out."

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were inside the house. They had forgotten their own fears in anxiety for their friend, and for several moments they stood listening for some sound which might denote the presence of others in the house besides themselves; then, as the silence remained unbroken, Jean switched on her torch.

The light showed them a small room which had once been the gun-room. Rusty guns still rested in their racks, some fishing tackle stood in one corner, and a box of flies, moth-eaten and dust covered, stood open on the table. Everything was as it had been left forty years before, and after a brief inspection Jean passed through the open door, and into a passage which led to a large hall.

Jean switched off her torch, and stood listening. But no sound save their own muffled breathing broke the silence, so she switched on her torch again, and played the light round the hall. There the same desolation met their eyes. Great spider's webs festooned the ceiling, a riding-crop lay on the floor where it had been flung, and on a small table lay an open book, its pages yellowed and mildewed with damp. Involuntarily the girls shuddered. Had Anna actually entered that terrible house alone? Jean turned the light of her torch on to the floor, and the next moment a startled exclamation burst from her lips. The dust lay thick on the floor, and clearly marked in the dust were their own footprints, and Anna's footprints, and behind Anna's footprints, following them so it seemed, were the marks of great, splay-footed, bare feet. Horrified, the girls stared at the tell-tale marks. Anna's footprints led towards a broad flight of stairs with the tracks of her trailer close behind; then, as the light shifted, it fell upon the prints of the bare feet returning, but this time they were alone. Jean gazed at the mixed trails for some seconds before she crossed the hall to the foot of the stairs.

"Look, Vyv," she whispered, shining the light on a patch of trampled dust. "Anna was starting to go upstairs when the owner of those awful feet pounced upon her. This is where it happened. Anna struggled, but he was too strong for her, and he must have picked her up, and carried her back the way he had come. Oh! Vyv, what has happened to her? Those feet; they look just like the feet of a huge negro I once saw, and——"

A dull thud startled Jean to silence, and caused the girls to switch off their torches. The sound had come from the back of the house, and with one accord Jean and Vyvien turned and fled back to the gun-room. The place was as they had left it, but they had barely reached the room before they heard the sound

of a door being opened, followed by the murmur of voices.

"Chief says we must cover up the footprints made by Pedro and the girl. Guess he's right, too. Who's going to worry what's underneath if the upstairs looks as though *no one had set foot in the house for* twenty years? Curse the girl! Well, she's got hers coming to her, and serve her right, spying round. She's down at Dead Man's Creek now, and in half an hour she'll be on her way out to sea in the motor-boat, and then——"

Jean waited to hear no more. Clutching hold of Vyvien she almost pushed her through the window, and then followed herself.

"Run, Vyv," she cried. "In a minute those men will discover our footprints, and then there's Anna. Half an hour, the man said. We've *got to do it, we simply must!*"



"Look, Vyv," she whispered.

"Do what?" gasped Vyvien. "Are you going to the village for help?"

"No time," answered Jean. "If Anna's to be saved, we must do it ourselves. Don't you understand, Vyv? She is going to be taken out to sea—out to sea—in half an hour.

to its fullest, causing a white wave to gather round the boat's bows as she leapt madly through the night.

"How far to the sea?" asked Vyvien from the bows where she crouched peering into the darkness.

"Three miles," answered Jean, "and unless the boat ahead is something special we ought to overtake her before then. Switch on the searchlight, Vyv. The ruffians must know we are after them, and the searchlight will blind them and help us."

A second later a dazzling beam of light shot out from the bows of the motor-boat, and as Jean swung her round a bend into a long reach the light picked up another boat about two hundred yards in front. Eagerly the girls gazed at the quarry ahead. There were two men in the boat, and Jean and Vyvien could see their white faces, as they gazed back at their pursuers.

"Only two, that's good!" exclaimed Jean. "We have the heels of them, too. Get your gun ready, Vyv, and if the brutes don't surrender immediately we get alongside fire at their legs. Don't worry about them; they deserve all they get."

Jean said nothing about the possibility of the men being also armed. They would not be expecting pursuit, so she hoped they would be unarmed, but in any case Anna had to be saved, even if the brutes had a whole arsenal on board.

Slowly the distance between the boats lessened. The girls could see the men striving desperately to get more speed out of their craft, but Jean's boat was the faster of the two, and every minute the boat ahead showed up more plainly in the beam of the searchlight. Momentarily Jean expected to find bullets flying unpleasantly near, but none came, and as the distance between the boats lessened until only fifty yards divided them, without the expected fusillade, the girls came to the conviction that their enemies were unarmed. Good! That should make matters easy. Two determined girls armed with shotguns were more than a match for two men unarmed. Jean called out to Vyvien.

"Fire your gun, Vyv. Don't aim at anyone, but if we can scare——"

The girl broke off with a cry of horror. What were those men doing? In the beam of the searchlight every movement of the men in the boat ahead was visible, and she had seen them suddenly bend down and lift a long, dark bundle from the bottom of the boat. For a moment they stood poised; then with a swing they flung the bundle out into the creek where it disappeared beneath the dark waters. The next moment the pursued boat was again rushing towards the sea.

Jean cut off the engine, and threw the gears into reverse, bringing the

She'll be just another disappearance like the others. Oh, run, Vyv, run!"

Fifteen minutes later the girls reached "The Beeches," where Jean dashed straight to the room where her father kept his guns. There she took two guns from the rack, and grabbed a packet of cartridges. Handing one of the guns to Vyvien, Jean led the way at a run out of the house, and down the garden to a boat-house which opened on to a narrow creek of dark, slow-moving water.

Jean unlocked the door of the boat-house, and turned on the electric light. The light showed a rakish-looking motor-boat resting quietly on the dark water, and followed by Vyvien, Jean sprang on board, and switched on the engine. With a splutter the engine awoke to life, and the boat began to glide out of the boat-house; then, as Jean swung her into the main stream, the engine settled down to a steady hum as the boat sped away through the darkness.

"Where are we going, Jean?" asked Vyvien in a voice of repressed excitement.

"To Dead Man's Creek. This stream leads into the creek, and if we can overtake the boat with Anna on board before she reaches the sea we may save her. That's what those guns are for. Load them, will you, Vyv. It's a desperate chance, and we may get it in the nec ourselves, but we've got to do i Don't you realise, Vyv, what thos men are going to do with Anna For some reason she's in their wa so they are going to take her ou to sea and drop her overboard. know I'm right. Now I mustn talk any more, or we shall ru aground. Lucky there's a moon t see by."

If Jean had not known the strean as she knew the palm of he hand, they would have been agroun before they had gone half a mile and Vyvien marvelled at the wa her friend steered the speedy boa through the darkness, swingin round bends, and dodging invisibl sandbanks. So they kept on fo ten minutes; then Jean pointed t a clump of dark trees some distanc ahead.

"That's where we enter the creek Now I wonder——"

She stopped short as from th creek ahead there came the regula chug-chug of a motor-boat. The sound was heading seaward, and with a cry, Jean increased the speed of the boat, and sent her tearing through the darkness. It was a risky thing to do. Once the boat checked as some mud clutched at her keel, but her speed carried her over the submerged bank, and a few seconds later Jean swung her into the broader waters of Dead Man's Creek. There the girl opened the throttle

boat to a grinding stop close to the spot where the dark bundle had disappeared. Vyvien watched her friend with amazement. She had been looking at Jean, and had not witnessed the swiftly acted drama, now as Jean flung off her shoes, and tore off her dress, she thought that her friend had gone suddenly mad.

"Jean, what——"

The rest of the sentence was lost in a cry of dismay, for, having rid herself of her dress, Jean had raised her arms above her head, and had straightway plunged overboard into the dark waters of Dead Man's Creek.

Vyvien gazed distractedly at the spot where her friend had disappeared. Had Jean gone crazy? Jean was a fine swimmer, but why plunge suddenly into the water, and allow the enemy to escape? Vyvien gazed down the creek. The other boat had disappeared, and the chug of her engine was growing fainter every moment. Vyvien started to pull off her shoes, intending to go to Jean's assistance, when suddenly a husky voice reached her from the water on the other side of the boat.



"I've got her, but she's all tied up."

"Throw us a rope, Vyv," said the voice. "*Quickly*, old girl! I've got her, but she's all tied up, and I can't hold her up for long."

Three minutes later, Jean and Vyvien were kneeling beside a

slender, dripping form swathed tightly with ropes at which the friends were cutting desperately with two pocket-knives.

"I saw them throw her overboard," gasped Jean, in response to a question from Vyvien. "I expect they counted on us stopping, and letting them escape. Lucky they hadn't time to tie weights on to her. Done, Vyv? Good. I think she's alive. Now for some of that first-aid they taught us at St. Margaret's."

But it was twenty minutes before Anna opened her eyes, and then for several seconds she gazed uncomprehendingly at the girls bending over her.

"That negro, that awful negro!" she muttered, clinging convulsively to Jean's arm. "Don't let him touch me. He took me to the kitchen. There's a stone floor in the kitchen, stone flags, and one of them was raised, and he carried me down——"

"Hush, Anna," interrupted Jean. "He's gone now, and you're with friends, Vyvien and Jean, and you're quite safe."

The hunted stare disappeared from Anna's eyes, and gave place to a look of recognition.

"Vyvien and Jean," she began, but Jean interrupted her.

"Yes, Vyvien and Jean, Anna, and now you mustn't talk any more. We're going to take you home, and put you to bed, and in the morning you'll be quite all right again."

* * *

An hour later the doctor, hastily summoned to "The Beeches," left the room where Anna had been put to bed.

"She'll be all right," he announced. "Keep her warm, and let her sleep." He turned and faced Jean. "Go and get into something dry yourself, my dear," he commanded, "and then join me and your friend downstairs. I want to hear what's happened. People don't usually go falling into the creek at this time of night, nor, if they fall in, do they come up bearing the marks of ropes upon their arms and legs."

"So that's the story," he commented some time later. "Well, you've both been remarkably plucky. Now you can leave everything to me. I shall go straight home and ring up the police at Norwich. This is a matter for them, and the sooner they are on the job the better the chance of catching the ruffians."

* * *

But though the police arrived on the scene with commendable promptitude the birds had already flown. They found plenty of evidence, however, to show the use to which the old house had been put. The trap-door in the kitchen was

easily located, and in the huge cellars to which it led they found great stores of contraband including saccharine, silk, and other more criminal commodities. Search also disclosed two secret tunnels, one of which came out near Dead Man's Creek, and the other in the middle of a wood half a mile inland.

"An ideal smugglers' headquarters, Miss Strangeways," said the police inspector, reporting to a thoroughly recovered Anna two days later. "They could bring the goods up the creek on a dark night, unload them into the house through one secret passage, and then send them out into the country through the other."

"But why did they attack me?" asked Anna. "I was only looking over the house, and I had no idea it was used by smugglers."

"Because they knew that the house had been left to you. . . . Oh! yes they did," as Anna expressed surprise. "An account of your uncle's death, together with his will, and a photograph of you were in the Norwich paper, so there is nothing strange in their knowing that you were the heiress. Once they knew that, and had guessed that you intended coming to live there, they had either to get rid of you or clear out themselves, and it was no doubt your sudden appearance alone upon the scene which decided them to try the former alternative."

"How beastly, I'll never be able to live there!" exclaimed Anna.

"Oh, yes, you will," put in Jean. "Now that the secret is known the house is no longer useful to the smugglers, and all you have to do is to fill in the passages to make it absolutely O.K. Am I not right, Inspector?"

"Quite, Miss Attwood. We are closing in upon the gang, and believe me, Miss Strangeways, once we have them they won't trouble you or anyone else for many years to come." He rose to say good-bye. "You have two very plucky friends, Miss Strangeways," he went on, shaking Anna's hand. "It requires nerve to dive into our creeks, I can tell you. The mud at the bottom is treacherous stuff. I've known more than one man go in and never come out again."

A CRUISING HOLIDAY

ALTHOUGH cruising in luxurious liners is not exactly as new as many people imagine, it is true that as a popular holiday idea cruising is only five years old.

It began in this way. Towards the end of 1931 several of our big shipping companies, engaged principally in running liners between this country and America, were beginning to feel the effect of the trade depression, and it was from this difficulty that a way out presented itself in the popular short cruises which were brought into being.

For some time before this it had been the custom for the big Atlantic liners to carry out pleasure cruises to the Mediterranean from New York, and also short cruises to such places as Havana in Cuba and Halifax, Nova Scotia. This form of holiday was regarded as the prerogative of the more leisured and wealthy people, but now the whole outlook on cruising has been so changed that thousands of people during the past few years have been able to realise the joys of travel at a very normal outlay.

The cruises from New York proved so enormously successful with Americans that it was thought that if a series of cheap cruises from Great Britain to the Mediterranean or the Norwegian Fjords were introduced, people in this country might also be induced to travel. So cruises from £1 per day were established. Those who have taken advantage of these holidays are not likely easily to forget the delights of a fortnight or so spent in surroundings of the utmost ease and elegance and visiting the beauty spots of the earth without discomfort.

Apart from the very welcome employment these holidays afloat have provided for seafarers and those scores of workers whose jobs are directly or indirectly connected with ships and they who go down to the sea in them, these cruises have accomplished two very important objects. In the first place they have taught us about our great Mercantile Marine, and in the second place they have brought us into contact with the people of those countries which lie beyond our own coastline.

The fact that we are an island has made shipping one of our greatest

and most essential industries. And yet, until cruising came along only that small percentage of our population who actually live in or near our seaports were really familiar with ships and seafarers. Cruising, however, has changed all that. And to-day, to thousands of seagoing holiday-makers who live in inland centres our shipping industry is now a very real thing.

On board the liners in which they have cruised they have come into daily contact with the discipline, efficiency and ready service which have made these great vessels second to none in the world; from the comfortable ease of deck-chairs they have watched snub-nosed tramps and lime-encrusted freighters bringing precious cargoes to Britain; and in many foreign ports they have seen with pride how the " Red Duster " of the Mercantile Marine predominates amongst the ensigns flown from the sterns of the shipping gathered there.

But perhaps the most lasting and greatest change which cruising has brought about is in the attitude of Britishers to people whom we were perhaps once inclined to dismiss from our thoughts and conversations as " foreigners."

One might almost say that cruising has become the jam which covers the twin pills of foreign history and geography. For whilst enjoying all the fun and health-giving benefit of a sea voyage, these cruising holiday-makers are perhaps unconsciously obtaining first-hand knowledge of people and conditions of life in other countries.

To the older members these actual contacts are but vague memories of far-off school days, but to the younger generation the hard facts found in the pages of text-books become vivid realities.

In the cruising itineraries of the Cunard White Star Line a special scholars' cruise is included for these young " ambassadors of commerce."

Names almost meaningless to the average person have taken on a new importance. The story of ancient Rome becomes a very different thing after a visit to this capital; the job of learning that poem about the burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna is doubly interesting when your ship has called there. Even our familiar Bible stories and the life of Jesus Himself take on a new meaning after a short stay in the Holy Land.

And when in due course such names as these and Gibraltar, Naples, Tunis, Barcelona and a host of others crop up in conversation, over the radio, or in the news of the day, they are no longer strange unfamiliar names but places whose fortunes or misfortunes are matters of real importance.

It need not concern you that you have little or no knowledge of the languages of the countries you visit,

as tours ashore to the principal places of interest are arranged by the shipping company as well as by the leading tourist agencies at the ports of call. If you have a desire to wander at will on your own, a phrase book will enable you to order refreshments, buy presents or post cards and ask the way back to the ship should you get lost. Wherever you go, carry your passport with you and take care of it.

One of the things you will do well to bear in mind is to obtain a necessary amount of the local currency before going ashore. You will get a better rate of exchange at the ship's office than you will from the natives, and you will be wise to exchange back into sterling any money that you do not spend. Foreign notes and coins are not much good as souvenirs to most people.

One of the most delightful aspects of this kind of holiday is that if you wish it all your days can be full of activity. You will find arranged for you many kinds of recreation, from a swim in the morning before breakfast to a dance in the evening. Deck-tennis, deck-quoits, shuffle board, table-tennis, tugs-of-war, "horse races" and games of various kinds will keep you as busy as you wish most of the day.

For a rest, and also for the less energetic of us, the ship's band will provide orchestral and other concerts—then there is the cinema and a visit to the library steward who will supply you with books to read whether your taste be high, middle or low-brow. Then, tucked away comfortably in a deck-chair in a quiet corner you can while away the health-giving hours between reading and the contemplation of sea and sky.

It must not be forgotten that when cruise passengers step ashore at foreign ports they become in a sense unofficial ambassadors from Great Britain, and that their actions and behaviour are closely watched and observed by the local population who, from them, form their opinions of what people in our country are like.

This is all to the good, because it does mean that Britishers and the nations who live along the Mediterranean and Scandinavian seaboards are at last getting to know one another.

So that it may be that cruising—a holiday idea born out of the great depression—may in its way be doing something to aid the work of the League of Nations in its efforts towards establishing the peace of the world.

Phillis the Philistine

By Eva Gray

PHILLIS woke up with the sun shining right into her eyes. For a moment she thought she was back in her own bedroom in the little frame house. Then she imagined that the rays were coming through the port-hole on to her bunk as they had done often enough on the long voyage in the sailing ship, which was the only vessel that called regularly at her far-away home. At last, she remembered she had got to Cornwall and was at school.

"*Breakfast at eight,*" Miss Darcy had told her, and now it was only six. There was time for a long swim. She glanced round the dormi. Everybody was fast asleep, even Betty Manvers, that jolly girl who had chummed up with her last night. Well, it didn't matter. She was used to swimming alone.

She got out of bed, slipped into the smart costume which Miss Darcy, who was one of Mother's girlhood friends, had purchased in London with the rest of her school outfit, and then she crept out of the room. She reached the main staircase and wished the old stairs did not creak so much. She did not want to wake those who were still sleeping. She did manage finally to slip out of the side door, which she had been told was the one reserved for the girls, seemingly without rousing anyone. Then with flying hair, she raced across the garden and down to the shore. That seemed like being home. She was glad the dear sea was within such easy reach. Perhaps the very water that was kissing these rocks had washed those others so far south.

The rocks themselves also reminded her of home. They were stern and menacing. She sought among them for a safe diving-place, shaking her head as she noted the swirl of the water between the jagged points. At last she found a smooth stretch between two reefs and carefully studied the flow before plunging in. Daddy had taught her to notice danger signs ever since she had been able to swim, which was as soon as she could walk.

Deciding she had discovered a safe spot, she dived into the cool green depths, rose and swam out. The tide was coming in and after breasting it for some time, she lay lazily floating on the waves. Then, she

raised herself, realised she had drifted perilously near the rocks and went out again. She was apt to forget everything when she was swimming and was used to spending hours in the water, but suddenly she thought of breakfast. As she forged her way in with long easy strokes, almost as much a creature of the sea as the fish below her, she hoped she was not late.

When she got a little nearer the shore, she raised her head so as to set a course for the gap in the reefs from where she had started. Then she noticed a number of girls standing about on the rocks. There were tall figures among them, some of which would be mistresses, she guessed. One of these had a pair of field-glasses to her eyes. Evidently all were watching the swimmer. Phillis was a little surprised at attracting so much attention, but she was a friendly soul. She rose a little and waved a long, glistening arm.

The comments on that action would have amazed her. Something of the enormity of her conduct did reach her consciousness when Miss Darcy received her as she scrambled out of the water. It was she who had the field-glasses, Phillis discovered.

"Phillis," she said sternly, "you have given us all a time of dreadful anxiety. I have even sent to the village to try to get a man to go out after you with a boat, but all the men are at sea fishing just now. And you have not even put on your rubber cap and your hair is wet. After breakfast you must come to my room."

"So sorry to upset you, Miss Darcy," returned Phillis easily. "I forgot the cap."

"That is much the smaller part of your naughtiness."

Phillis laughed.

"I know. The worse was worrying you. Mum gets fidgety too when I am swimming, but Dad tells her I'm like a fish in the water."

"We will not discuss your parents just now, Phillis. Dress quickly or you will be late for breakfast."

"All right. I'll only be a jiff and a half."

The gasps of horror from all around were quite lost on Phillis. She rushed to the dormitory and rubbed herself down, leaving a wet patch and a wet gown on the floor. She heard about that from Matron later. Then with her bobbed curls still damp, she flew down to the breakfast-room.

"Here comes Phil the Philistine," was Betty's hail. "Don't you know, Phil, that it is a capital crime to swim here. And to bunk out of the dormi. and go by yourself . . . my! words fail. Our pre. woke us all when she missed you. I think you must have disturbed her when you went out, for it was awfully early. Then I noticed your bathing-dress had gone. If only I had tumbled to it that you meant to use it this morning when

you took it out of your drawer to show me, I could have put you wise."

Phil was puzzled.

"But what's the good of swimming-costumes if we don't swim?"

"Oh, we're allowed to mess about on the edge and dip into pools on hot days, but the prin. has fits, positive fits, at the *thought of any of us* going in deeper than our waists."

"It is indeed, Phillis. I am glad you like it."

"But mustn't I swim at all, Miss Darcy? I don't know how I shall live without swimming."

"I will try to make arrangements for you to get a swim occasionally while you are in my charge. I regret *we have no school swimming-bath.*"

"We could easily make one. We



"But mustn't I swim at all, Miss Darcy?"

could let the sea into the tennis court."

"You are quite right. It would be possible to construct a good swimming-bath where the tennis court is now. I have had an expert down to go into the matter. The cost would be about a thousand pounds."

"Whew!"

"My dear, I am willing to make all

"Then I'm in for a lecture, I suppose. What will she say when I go to her?"

Miss Darcy did not say much. She told Phillis the rule and mentioned the supreme danger of the coast thereabouts.

"I saw that with half an eye," returned the culprit. "It's nearly as bad as at home, but it is lovely."

allowances for you, but I must insist on you noticing how the other girls address me and that you model your own conversation with me on theirs."

"I'm jolly sorry I'm making such a mess of things."

"*Don't worry too much. You'll* soon get into our ways if you really try. Now, as to the swimming-bath, the girls are helping in all sorts of ways to raise money that the school may eventually get it. It will not be in the time of the youngest here, I am afraid, but I am sure that deters no one. Now before you go into class, promise me you will not swim again without permission."

Phillis hesitated.

"You realise that I cannot possibly be responsible for allowing any of my girls to go into real danger as bathing from this special bit of shore is?"

Phillis nodded miserably.

"I promise," she said faintly. "I won't go in except in case of emergency. Dad always tacks that on to his promises."

Miss Darcy looked at her searchingly.

"Phillis, I trust no emergency will occur. I accept the condition, for you are certainly a wonderful swimmer and if need did arise, your powers might prove useful. In my turn, I will promise to do all I can to give you opportunities to practise them. Sometimes we go along to Polstaven, where bathing is comparatively safe. We'll go this Saturday, all being well. Now run along, child."

Although really dismayed about the swimming, Phillis left the principal's room definitely loving her and quite as definitely determined to do *all she could to help the school to get* that swimming-bath.

She also resolved to do her very best to learn to speak and act like other girls, for Mother and Dad had sacrificed their own chance of a holiday in England that she might come home to be taught.

The fine spirit in which she tackled everything made Phillis a general favourite. She might even have lost the title Phil the Philistine if she had not occasionally blundered into scrapes and if the title itself had not been so catchy. As to swimming, after the first week or two she did not miss it so much, for there was a period of heavy storms which would have deterred even her from going into the water, for she had learnt not to be foolhardy.

But, at last, the weather changed. A beautiful, bright calm morning dawned and it was a fourth Saturday, which meant a whole holiday.

"We're going wood-picking," Betty told her. "We gather as much driftwood as we can for the winter fires. They are awfully jolly to watch. Sometimes there are pretty coloured flames. Miss Darcy puts what is saved off the coal bills to the bath fund."

Phillis was interested at once.

"Are you allowed to gather the wood?" asked Mildred, another new girl and a special chum. "I was at a sea-side place once where no one was allowed to get it, for it belonged to the lord of the manor and the mean old pig wouldn't let anyone pick up a stick, though the beach was often strewn with lovely bits of wood."

"The school is the lord of the manor here," returned Betty grandly. "Miss Darcy told us all about it once. She says we have the right to what is washed up on the shore or found floating not more than a mile out to sea. The rights were granted with the manor hundreds of years ago by one of the old kings, I forget which, and now the school has bought the house, it has the rights too. Of course, this doesn't apply to lost property."

Almost all the school turned out on to the shore. There was a lot of driftwood about. Some of the bits had been in the water, perhaps for years and were rounded by the waves. Other pieces suggested possibly recent tragedy. Phillis, Betty and Mildred, who worked together, hoped that a huge plank they carried to the wood-shed had been washed overboard from a timber ship and that it was not itself part of a wrecked vessel. They were discussing the plank as they returned to the shore and had nearly reached it again when they noticed most of the girls were scurrying off in the direction of Polstaven.

"A whale," shouted someone to them.

Then one of the mistresses dropped back to explain.

"Old Pearce came down to tell us that there is a dead whale at Polstaven, washed up in the last storm. Miss Darcy has given permission for us all to go and see it before they begin cutting it up. We must hurry. Come along. We've only an hour and a half before dinner."

Phillis thought it a terrible fuss to make about a whale and was amazed when Betty and Mildred told her that they had never seen one in their lives and that probably none of the girls or mistresses had done so either. Then she was all eagerness, too. She urged her chums to hurry and, when they arrived, acted as showman.

"It's a sperm whale," she informed them. "I've seen heaps of them. Perhaps the poor thing swam hundreds of miles before it died."

"Perhaps it has been washed about hundreds of miles," put in Betty. But Phillis shook her head.

"It hasn't been dead more than a few hours, I'm sure," she said, then suddenly became very thoughtful.

It was on the way home that the wonderful thing happened. Phillis was well ahead of the others. She was always more agile on the rocks than any of the rest. To-day she seemed to leap from point to point.

Betty and Mildred cried for mercy. Phillis laughed and stood on one of the near school reefs gazing out to sea. Then suddenly, without a word to anyone, she ran farther along the reef to where the water was washing against the rocks, threw up her arms and dived into the sea.

Betty and Mildred screamed.

"She's gone mad," said Betty.

Mildred flew. Betty's excitement attracted other girls and mistresses. Soon nearly the whole school was watching Phillis as on that first morning. Both girls and mistresses shouted, hoping she would hear and return. But she swam on. Then someone noticed a dark-looking mass floating on the surface and that Phillis seemed to be heading for it.



She threw up her arms and dived into the sea.

"The sight of the whale has made her homesick and she is going to try to swim to the other side of the Equator. Mil, sprint along to old Pearce and tell him to launch his boat and go after her. You go with him and I'll try and keep Phil in sight and signal to you. You'll understand my signals better than he will and will be able to direct him."

"She's after that bit of driftwood," yelled the girl, who saw the mass. "Silly ass, there's plenty on the shore without her risking her life to get that."

Then there was a sigh of relief. If Phillis were really after the driftwood, it was reasonably certain she would soon turn, and knowing her powers in the water it was fairly

sure she would get in safely, without the boat, which did not appear.

"My stars," muttered Betty, her anxiety turned in a new direction, "if she does get in all right, what a wigging she'll get!"

As Betty spoke, Miss Darcy came up. She took in the situation at a glance and after Betty had told her that she had already sent for a boat, stood with compressed lips and anxious eyes. Then, to everybody's joy, Phillis was seen to turn, and swim towards the shore, pushing the black mass before her.

Miss Darcy moved to the spot where she knew the girl would come in, and the rest of the school followed her. Evidently Phillis noticed the manœuvre, for she waved. Miss Darcy's eyes sparkled with anger, and Betty stifled an exclamation. Had her chum no sense? Apparently Phillis had not. Her progress was slow now, but she waved now and then with what seemed to everyone the maddest and most impudent gaiety.

"The girl must be well punished," muttered Miss Darcy. "I have been lenient too long."

At last Phillis was on her feet, pushing her prize in front of her.

"The swimming-bath," she shouted excitedly. "The swimming-bath! Help me, I can't drag this up by myself."

"Leave that driftwood instantly and come here, Phillis," said Miss Darcy. She spoke quietly in spit of her anger, half fearing that Philli might plunge into the sea agair But she need not have worriec Phillis burst into delighted laughter

"It isn't driftwood," she cried "Do help, some of you. I believ it weighs more than Petersen's piec did."

Miss Darcy almost stamped.

"Phillis, will you attend to me Leave that, whatever it is and com right out of the water at once." She felt she dared not say too mucl until Phillis stood on dry land, but some of the urgency in her tone reached Phillis at last.

"Oh, Miss Darcy, I didn't mean to worry you, I didn't really. I was sure you would count this a real emergency."

"Phillis, will you come here and leave that. Now. AT ONCE."

"But if I do, Miss Darcy, it will float out again and we might be years before we get the swimming-bath. We shall never have another chance like this. I've been searching for ambergris ever since Petersen found his and I haven't seen a scrap."

Miss Darcy's expression changed.

"What's that you say, Phillis?"

"The swimming-bath, Miss Darcy! Do let the girls help."

Phillis was still incoherent.

Then, to everybody's surprise, Miss Darcy herself recklessly plunged a daintily clad foot into the water and bent forward to help Phillis. After

that, many willing hands dragged the mass ashore.

"There is a faint scent, Phillis," said Miss Darcy. "Perhaps you are right, child. But I wouldn't have had you risk your life even for the swimming-bath. There! run and take off your wet clothes. We'll look after this, whatever it is."

"It is ambergris, Miss Darcy," returned Phillis, as she prepared to go. "I'm quite, quite sure of it. I thought there was just a tiny chance of finding some when I saw that whale was a sperm and that it had not been dead very long. I knew I should be able to recognise it at once, for Petersen, our neighbour, showed me the lump he found and which enabled him to return to Norway. And I couldn't wait to ask you to let me go in, for if I had done so, the ambergris would have been at Polstaven by now."

"There, child, that will do. Perhaps you had sufficient excuse."

Phillis ran off, a little crestfallen, and Miss Darcy turned to the girls who were crowding round, asking questions.

"Ambergris is formed in the intestines of the sperm whale," she began. "It is used in the manufacture of perfume. It is very scarce and consequently very valuable. I read of a large lump which, broken up and sold bit by bit, fetched many thousands of pounds. I think it is probable that this piece, wisely disposed of, will indeed pay for the swimming-bath."

There was a wild hurrah, but Miss Darcy held up her hand.

"Girls, I have never actually seen ambergris. This mass may be something absolutely worthless. Anyhow, carry it up to the gym. to remain there until we get expert opinion."

But Phillis was right. It was ambergris and it fetched enough for the bath and left a substantial sum over. Miss Darcy suggested to the governors that this should be used to found a scholarship for colonial girls. They agreed, and Phillis was the first to hold it. So, as there were no more fees to pay for her, Mother and Dad were able to come to Cornwall for the opening of the bath. In fact, Mother had to do the deed.

"Phillis was called the Philistine, I hear," said Miss Darcy to Mother, after the ceremony, "but now she has another title. What is the new one, Phillis?"

Phillis was sure Miss Darcy knew, but she had to answer.

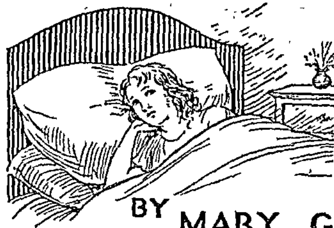
"The Filbert," she replied, a little shyly.

"Why the Filbert?" Mother demanded.

Phillis was glad the bath was open and the girls were actually enjoying themselves in it at the moment. She had a way of escape from the teasing.

"Because I'm such a knut at swimming," she returned, and dived into the deep end.

MUSHROOMS AT MIDNIGHT



BY MARY GERVAISE

"IT would be fun," said Biddy wistfully.

"Oh, topping! A real adventure!" cried Joy, her blue eyes sparkling at the thought. "And there's a full moon to-night, and everything. It looks as though we were meant to do it! Doesn't it, Kirsty?"

"Ye-es, but the point is——" Kirsty stopped short and began to chew the top of her pencil—a sure sign of perturbation.

"The point is, it isn't our field," said the fourth girl, looking up from the book she was reading. "If you pick Farmer Hitchin's mushrooms without asking him, it'll be stealing, you know."

Biddy Barton's small freckled face flushed an angry pink, for after all it was her idea.

"That's just like you, Gwen Gale!" she exclaimed. "Always butting in where you're not wanted, and trying to put everyone else in the wrong. If we want to go, we'll go—we shan't ask your permission!"

"I didn't really suppose you would," said Gwen quietly, and took up her book again.

Biddy glared at her, but said no more. Gwen, who never lost her temper or tried to force her opinions on anyone, had the faculty of making the rest of the Fourth Form at Hazeldene feel rather uncomfortable sometimes. Madcap Biddy, the acknowledged leader of that somewhat obstreperous form, naturally resented this, and would not own —even to herself—that Gwen was generally in the right.

"Let's do it!" said Joy. "And if Gwen wants to sneak, she jolly well can."

Gwen's fair head bent still lower over her book. She did not appear

to have heard, but Biddy—who couldn't help admiring such perfect self-control—felt more uncomfortable than ever.

She knew that Gwen was as straight as a die and would never dream of betraying them; yet she didn't want to stand up for her in front of Kirsty and Joy. "It's not that I'm a coward," she thought, "but they'd only laugh at me." And then she realised that she was a coward, for she couldn't bear to be laughed at.

"To-night, then, at the witching hour of twelve!" she said gaily, and subsided as the common-room door opened and Miss Armorel came in.

The autumn term had not yet begun, but Biddy, Kirsty, Joy, and Gwen, whose parents happened to be abroad, had spent most of their holidays at the school, in the charge of Miss Armorel, the Head Mistress's younger sister who looked after the housekeeping and made her home at the school. She was one of the prettiest, jolliest and nicest people it would be possible to meet, and all the Hazeldene girls were very fond of her. Tact she possessed in abundance, and it was largely through her efforts that the four girls had rubbed along together for the last fortnight without lapsing into a state of open warfare For a more ill-assorted quartet it would be impossible to imagine!

There was Biddy, a veritable imp of mischief, revelling in adventures of all kinds and impatient of any authority. Then there was Joy Garnett, brilliant, reckless, and alas! inclined to be unreliable. Kirsty Campbell, on the other hand, was her exact opposite—stolid, slow, but as honest as the day. And Gwen—well, nobody knew what Gwen was really like, since she held herself aloof from the other girls. She had come to Hazeldene at the beginning of the summer term, and although everyone had been quite friendly towards her she had not responded to their overtures. Then she and Biddy had come to grips, and the Fourth had stood by its idol and frowned upon the outsider who had dared to argue with her.

It was only a trivial argument, too—that was the silly part of it; and Biddy, who respected the other girl for standing up for what she thought was right, would have apologised and made friends. But how could she, when all the others had been on her side? She would be a laughing-stock! So she stifled her conscience and went on as before, losing no opportunity of baiting Gwen.

"Hallo, Miss Armorel!" cried Joy, springing forward in her impulsive way. "Have you come to talk to us? Are you getting awfully excited about to-morrow?"

The mistress laughed as she sank into the chair which Gwen had unobtrusively pulled up for her.

"Well, not exactly, Joy—when one's grown up, you know, birthdays are no longer the breathless affairs they used to be! But I have some good news for you all. My brother is coming for the day, and he's driving us all into Exeter for a matinée and tea."

"Oh, how absolutely marvellous!" cried Biddy. "How *frightfully* kind of him to take us too. Is it to celebrate your birthday, Miss Armorel?"

"Yes, but he was coming over in any case, to fetch something—I thought you'd be pleased," said the mistress. "What a lovely evening? You'll go for a walk, won't you, before supper?"

"Won't you come with us?" begged Biddy, but Miss Armorel shook her head.

"No, I've let all the maids go out, and I can't leave the house. But you go off and enjoy yourselves. No trespassing, mind!"

With a smile that included them all, she rose and went out of the room, and the four girls looked at one another.

"Isn't she sweet?" gushed Joy. "I *do* wish we'd known about her birthday in time to get her a proper present."

"Maybe we could buy something in Exeter," Kirsty suggested, but Biddy shook her head.

"A birthday present's no good unless you get it in the morning. And we know she loves mushrooms. She was fearfully disappointed when we looked for them in the field last week and couldn't find any."

"Yes, but if we do go and get some of Farmer Hitchin's, won't she wonder where they came from and ask awkward questions?" Joy bit her lower lip pensively. She wanted to give Miss Armorel a present, but she didn't want to land herself in trouble. "She's always *telling* us not to trespass."

"I know, but that's only in fun. She doesn't think we really would. And if we gave her a basket of mushrooms to-morrow morning, she'd think we got them from our own field. And it wouldn't be trespassing, exactly," said Biddy, meeting Gwen's steady gaze defiantly, "because old Hitchin never picks them or bothers about them at all."

"Well, if you think she won't suspect, I'm all for it," said Joy. "We'll start about half-past eleven. You'll have to wake me up, Biddy—Kirsty's a regular dormouse!"

There were no dormitories at Hazeldene, but double bedrooms instead. Joy and Kirsty slept together, and Biddy shared a room with Gwen.

The three conspirators went for a walk, and Gwen, who had not been asked to accompany them, wandered round the garden, thinking hard. By that strange thing known as the attraction of opposites, she liked

Biddy Barton better than anyone else at Hazeldene, and although she had long ago given up hope of their ever being friends, she felt that somehow or other she must shield Biddy from her own impetuous temperament. This mushroom escapade, for instance, was almost certain to be found out, and Biddy, the instigator, would get the lion's share of the blame.

"If only I could stop them!" she thought; but there seemed no means of doing so. She was still pacing up and down when the trio returned from their walk, and she braced herself to speak to Biddy on the subject. It was waste of breath, however, as she soon realised.

"Do mind your own business, Gwen! We're not asking you to come," said Biddy impatiently.

When supper was over the four again repaired to their common room, and the final arrangements were made.

"It'll be perfectly easy getting in and out. The cloakroom window doesn't creak at all, and we can leave it open," declared Biddy. "Baskets? I've got those already—bagged them from the kitchen and parked them in the shrubbery. The moon will be as bright as day, and we're sure to get simply heaps of mushrooms. Miss Armorel will think we got them this evening," she concluded rather sheepishly, and avoided looking at Gwen. Truth to tell, she was beginning to feel qualms, though that foolish pride of hers would not let her admit it.

Bedtime came, and the four split up into pairs. Biddy and Gwen did not exchange a single word while they undressed, and after Miss Armorel had tucked them up and said good night they lay silent and wide-eyed, each busy with her own thoughts. Biddy dozed a little, but Gwen didn't. She looked from time to time at her little luminous clock, and saw at last that the hands were pointing to half-past eleven. Oh, if only Biddy would stay asleep! But at that moment she heard the other bed creak, and Biddy, yawning audibly, began to put on her clothes.

Very soon she was ready, and tiptoed out of the room. Gwen sighed and turned over. Lying awake wouldn't do any good; she had far better go to sleep. She was just drifting off into dreamland when she heard the sound of voices on the landing outside. Thinking the others had been caught red-handed, she jumped out of bed and opened the door a crack.

". . . must be more careful," Miss Armorel was saying. "I found the cloakroom window wide open just now, and had to close it myself. Remember to lock up properly in future, Ivy."

To which the maid in question answered submissively: "Yes, madam."

Gwen's heart nearly stopped beating. So the window was shut, and Biddy and Co. were locked out! Something would have to be done at once—and she would have to do it. She pulled on her stockings and slipped her tunic over her pyjamas. Then, clutching her coat and a pair of shoes, she let herself out of the bedroom and crept downstairs.

Silently as a shadow she made her way to the cloakroom and opened the window again. Then — funny Gwen!—she climbed out and set off towards Farmer Hitchin's meadow. You see, by opening that window she had made herself an outlaw like the rest, and she wanted to be with them if they were caught.

It was a beautiful night. The moon looked like a great silver coin floating through the cloudless sky, and the trees cast strange shadows on the path. Gwen was not a nervous person—and what is there to be nervous about in the country *on a moonlit night?*—but the familiar landscape looked so different and uncanny that she was very glad when she reached the hedge which divided Farmer Hitchin's land from the school fields. She struggled through the thorn bushes, leaving part of one stocking and some of her hair behind, and looked out eagerly for the three figures. Yes! There they were, coming slowly towards her. She went to meet them.

They were arguing about something; she could tell that by their voices.

"A beastly wash-out!" That was Joy. "Bad enough hunting for the wretched things without being pushed into a ditch!"

"Don't be a mutt," said Biddy. "You know I couldn't help it. I'm sorry if you scratched yourself——"

"I'll be black and blue to-morrow. I wish we'd never come!"

"So do I," said Kirsty gloomily. "I'm as tired as tired can be—and I stepped right in my basket and squashed half the—— Why! Here's Gwen!"

"Has anything happened?" asked Biddy swiftly.

In as few words as possible Gwen explained about the cloakroom window.

"Let's go back now," she said urgently, "and if we're lucky we'll get in without being heard."

"We'll be caught, sure as eggs," said Joy. "Our luck's out. We've only got a few mushrooms—it's so hard to see them by this light—and Biddy shoved me into a ditch and I've hurt my leg.—This is not *my* idea of fun!"

Gwen might have said that it wasn't hers either, but she held her peace, and the dejected little cavalcade returned to Hazeldene.

"There's a car in the drive!" gasped Biddy, catching sight of a rear light, and a moment later

"Oh, thank goodness! It's gone. I wonder who——?"

"What does it matter?" snapped Joy. "Let's go in."

The window was still ajar, and they all climbed in without the slightest difficulty, and closed it after them. Then, carrying the precious mushrooms, they crept up to their rooms.


The window was still ajar, and they all climbed in.

Biddy hesitated a moment before getting into bed.

"You've saved us from a frightful row," she said gruffly.

"Oh, that's all right!" was the offhand reply. Gwen was far too honest to trade on the other girl's natural gratitude. "Good night, Biddy."

"Good night, Gwen." But this time it was Biddy who lay aw[ake] pondering, and her thoughts [were] not happy ones.

Next morning she got up and gave the mushrooms to the to fry for Miss Armorel's Alas, instead of the basketful had imagined, there were only very few, though the mistress said she couldn't possibly eat them all and made each girl have one or two on her plate.

"How very sweet of you, my dears, to think of it!" she said. "Of course I don't want you to buy me a present—these mushrooms are just what I like."

Hardly had they finished them, and embarked on the marmalade stage, than a maid came to the door and asked to speak to Miss Armorel. The four girls went on with their breakfast, and presently the mistress returned.

"I want you to amuse yourselves as best you can this morning," she said in a strained voice. "Keep at the far end of the garden, please. I —I am not very well——" And with a poor attempt at a smile she hurried away.

"What can be the matter?" asked Biddy.

"The mushrooms, perhaps," said Kirsty ghoulishly. "I thought two or three of them looked awfully like toadstools!"

"But — they're poison. People die!" gasped Biddy, turning almost as white as poor Miss Armorel.

"Well, you would go and get them. It was your scheme," said Joy.

Biddy looked at the girl she had believed to be her friend, and the contempt in her eyes made even Joy wince.

"Yes," she said, "it was my scheme."

"Don't be an ass," said Gwen brusquely. "We were all in it together. And—I don't think they're toadstools at all, but we'd better go and see what's happening."

Somehow she seemed to have taken command of the situation, and this time nobody even thought of telling her to mind her own business. They ran out of the dining-room and went to Miss Armorel's study, but she wasn't there; so they asked the first maid they saw what had become of her.

"She's in the study 'phoning, Miss Gwen," said the maid, who looked scared. "Don't disturb her now, I shouldn't. She's got business to attend to."

"She—she isn't dying?" cried Biddy. "Perhaps she's ringing up the doctor—or her lawyers——"

"Or the police," said Joy.

"Will you be quiet!" said Gwen, turning on her angrily. "Biddy's feeling bad enough without your rubbing it in. Miss Armorel's not ill, is she, Ivy?"

"She doesn't seem exactly well, Miss Gwen," the maid answered evasively, and at that moment the study door opened and Miss Armorel came towards them. The colour had returned to her cheeks, and she was smiling.

"Oh, you're not dead after all!" choked Biddy, flinging her arms round the mistress's neck.

Miss Armorel gasped. "My dear child, why should you think I was dead? Though I shall be soon if you go on throttling me—— That's better!" as Biddy relaxed her strangle-hold. "Now tell me, one of you, what gave you such a ridiculous idea!"

"We thought perhaps they were toadstools!" Kirsty blurted out, and Miss Armorel looked at them incredulously.

"But surely you know how to tell them apart! Mushrooms are brown underneath, and toadstools are pink——"

"Yes, but—we picked them at midnight!" gulped Biddy, intent now on that open confession which is said to be so beneficial to the soul. "It was all my fault——"

"I was in it too," said Gwen, and after an appreciable pause Kirsty and Joy muttered: "So were we."

But Miss Armorel wasn't listening.

"Midnight!" she said. "That explains it, then. Come into the common room, my dears, and I'll tell you about the terrible shock I've just had. It's all right, Ivy," she added, to the maid: "Mr. Jack took them away last night."

She went into the common room, followed by the four mystified girls, and then she began her tale.



"Oh, you're not dead after all!" choked Biddy.

"You remember asking me to come out last night, and I said I couldn't, because I didn't want to leave the house? Well, I was keeping something very valuable in the safe, and I was terribly afraid something might happen to it. You know, of course, that my brother is a hydraulic engineer. Well, he's

just invented a means of purifying water far more simply and cheaply than any other that's ever been used, and it was arranged that he should deliver the formula into the hands of Sir ——"—she mentioned the name of a famous scientist—" who will be in Exeter to-day."

"It's just like a crook play!" said Biddy ecstatically.

The mistress smiled. "Yes, it's even more like one than you think! My brother suspected that one of his laboratory assistants was rather too much interested in his invention, and thought the man meant to steal a march on him, perhaps, and pass it off as his own. So he asked me to look after the papers for him. Of course he could have taken them to his bank, but he was very busy and he knows I'm always here. So yesterday morning I drove over to see him, and he gave them to me."

"Oh, I see now, Miss Armorel!" cried Joy. "You had them in the safe and thought somebody might pin—I mean, steal them if there was no one in the house. But they're all right, aren't they? They're still in the safe?"

"No, they are not," said Miss Armorel, her eyes twinkling as she enjoyed the girls' astonishment. "That was what gave me such a shock at breakfast. I had a bad fright—not ptomaine poisoning!" And she laughed at Biddy's rueful face. "Ivy, who was in the secret, came in to say that she thought the safe had been tampered with, and when I went to look I found that the papers had gone! So I telephoned to my brother, and learnt from him what had happened."

She paused for a moment. "It's all your fault, you know!" she went on, trying to look severe. "He was driving past here late last night—in a great hurry, by the way, to meet his wife who was coming home by a late train—when he suddenly noticed a dark figure running across the lawn."

"That was Gwen, I suppose," said Joy.

"It was one of you, evidently. But he didn't know that. He'd been worrying about his formula all day, and naturally thought that the worst had happened, and a burglar had stolen it. So he stopped the car and came into the house—he has his own key, of course—and went straight to the safe. The papers were there, but the shock had unnerved him so that he decided to take them with him and keep them on his person until he could hand them over."

"But didn't he leave a note or anything?" asked Biddy indignantly.

"My dear, he was in far too much of a hurry. He snatched up the papers and rushed away, and just managed to be at the station in time. Of course he meant to telephone me early this morning—in

fact, he was just about to do so when he had my call. Well, that's enough about that!" said Miss Armorel briskly. "Now I want to hear all about your midnight adventure."

She looked grave when Biddy, the spokeswoman, told her that the mushrooms had come from Farmer Hitchin's field, and not as she had supposed, from the school grounds.

"Still," she said, "it's holiday time, and I won't punish you, because I feel quite certain that you will never do such a thing again. You must go round to the farm to-day and tell Mr. Hitchin what you did, and beg his pardon—no, I know it won't be pleasant, but it must be done. And then I want you all to give me your word of honour that you will never again leave this building at night. Had it been term-time, I should have punished you all most severely."

"If you please, Miss Armorel, Gwen wasn't in it," said Biddy. "She tried to persuade us not to go."

The mistress frowned. "But I thought Joy said——"

"Yes, I did go, Miss Armorel," said Gwen, "and it must have been me—I mean I—your brother saw, because the others were together and I was by myself. I followed them."

"Yes—to save us from being caught!" burst out Biddy, and explained about the cloakroom window.

"Well," said Miss Armorel, when the story was finished, "I should think you all realise by this time that 'the way of transgressors is hard.' Now run along and get that apology over, and be back in time for an early lunch."

The dear old farmer roared with laughter when the culprits confessed their misdeeds.

"As for them mushrooms, take 'em and welcome," he said. "Fungus ain't in my line, missies!"

"Nor in mine!" said Biddy fervently.

That evening, when they had returned from Exeter, where Miss Armorel's brother had entertained them royally, she sought out Gwen, and—conquering her pride for good and all—asked her if she could "forgive and forget."

"Because, you know, we could be friends," she said tentatively. "I think I've always felt that. That's why I've been such a beast to you—I knew you disapproved of me, and I thought the others would laugh if I gave up doing mad things. Of course, you may not want to——"

"I do, though," said Gwen, and held out her hand. "I'd rather be friends with you than anyone else in the world. As for the others—let them laugh! It doesn't matter, does it?"

And, with a glorious sense of freedom, Biddy realised that from now onwards it wouldn't matter in the least.

TRAPPED IN THE SNOW

By Beryl C. Lawley

"LOOK out!" shouted Nora Croft in alarm. Hurriedly she tried to turn aside as her chum Alison Bentley came hurtling down the Nursery Slopes. But the tip of Alison's right ski caught the back of Nora's left, and a moment later the pair pitched headlong into the soft snow.

"Sorry!" Alison gasped, shaking the white powder from her glove gauntlets before attempting to rise. "All my fault."

"Get off my back!" groaned Nora. "You weigh thirteen stone and you feel like twenty. Never did I meet such a clumsy ski-er. You must be the champion tumbler in the whole Swiss Alps."

Scrambling to her feet, Alison pulled her crimson-faced friend into an upright position before picking up her own sticks. But unfortunately her skis were pointing straight down the slope and all at once they ran away with her.

"Oh!" wailed their unfortunate owner. "Stop me, somebody!"

A burst of laughter rippled across the Nursery as the other beginners saw this all too familiar mishap. But Alison's career was soon over. Catching her skis on a protruding rock she flopped heavily on to her back.

Miss Fortune, the mistress in charge of the holiday party from St. Bernard's, came swiftly to her assistance.

"Not hurt, are you?" she enquired cheerily.

"Only — lost — my — breath," Alison panted, trying to smile.

"I think you've done enough ski-ing for to-day," Miss Fortune decreed firmly as she raised Alison's shoulders. "You've been on the slopes all the morning and are getting stale. Yesterday you improved a lot. Take your equipment back to the hotel and have a walk until tea-time. Nora Croft will go with you. Why not explore the pine wood? You can't get lost; it's not big enough."

"Come on, Alison," said Nora good-naturedly as she joined them. Pulling off her skis she clioked back

a laugh, for the bigger girl was so buried in snow that it was taking some little time to release her. However, at last she was freed and the two girls walked briskly towards their hotel.

"Wish I could ski like Kitty Twiss," sighed Alison. "She's absolutely first rate!"

"She comes here every winter," envied Nora. "She goes to school in Switzerland and has no end of practice."

"What's happened to her today?" Alison asked.

"Gone off by herself, I believe. She is lucky. Fancy being allowed to stay on one's own at the hotel. My people would have fits."

"So would mine," laughed Alison. "Kitty never even put in an appearance at lunch."

"It was awfully nice of her to coach us yesterday," said Nora warmly. "Wish we could pay her back."

"Perhaps we'll have a chance later. But she was so bucked at your progress that I'm sure she thought the time hadn't been wasted."

After leaving their skis and sticks at the hotel the girls tramped along the snowy road to the pine wood. Pausing at the entrance Nora drew a deep breath.

"I'll never forget this holiday," she vowed. "Look at the trees, it's like fairyland."

"You wouldn't dream anything could be so lovely," replied Alison softly. "Those branches draped in snow are just superb."

"And the undergrowth traced so delicately in white," Nora added. "It's a shame to walk on it."

"There will be another fall tonight," Alison predicted, looking at the sky.

For twenty minutes the pair wandered in the deserted pine wood. Then, through a gap in the trees, could be seen a small village. Making their way towards a tiny chalet the girls soon reached the road and stared at Mont Grand towering above them.

"Where does the road go?" Nora asked.

"It skirts the wood and leads to our hotel in that direction," Alison returned, nodding to the right. "I don't know about the other way. My goodness, look at that slope up Mont Grand!"

"Seems more like a precipice to me," joked Nora. "I suppose it can be ski-ed."

"Oh yes, experts frequently do it. See that track winding up to the right? That's for ordinary ski-ers. Kitty often comes here. She told me about it. She said that when you have climbed a little way the view is gorgeous."

"Let's scramble up a bit," Nora proposed. "Miss Fortune wouldn't mind us going a few feet. Our boots

are nailed so we'll have a good grip. And, anyway, falls don't matter very much when you're wearing ski-ing suits."

"Right you are!" Alison agreed, starting ahead.

There was a thin covering of loose snow over the icy surface, and although Nora managed very well the bigger-built Alison was constantly slipping. However, finally they both reached the top of the slope and stood looking down the winding path up which they had scrambled.

"We'd never have managed the straight, steep way," remarked Nora.

"My word, no!" panted Alison. "See, there's our hotel. The Nursery Slopes must be hidden by the pine wood. We'd better be getting down."

"It's a long way to the top," murmured Nora, turning and gazing up Mont Grand. "But it's really not very steep above here."

"Probably worse than it looks," Alison retorted. "I say!" Catching her friend's arm she pointed upwards. "What's that coloured thing waving? I believe it's a distress signal."

"One, two, three, four, five, six!" counted Nora excitedly. "Then a pause. Yes, it must be. Listen!"

A faint cry came to the girls' ears, and impulsively Nora started forward. Alison restrained her.

"Wouldn't it be better to hurry back to the village for help?" she suggested. "Remember, we're a couple of novices."

"I'm sure we ought to go on," Nora urged, wildly waving back. The distress signal had started again, but stare as they might neither girl could see anything except the narrow, coloured strip fluttering frantically against the white background.

"It wouldn't be noticed from the village," Alison exclaimed. "Wonder how long it will take us to reach the spot? Must be quite half-way up."

"Mind the crevasses!" Nora warned. "Give them a wide berth. Sometimes the snow overhangs the edges."

Stumbling and staggering the pair toiled upwards. The path soon grew fainter and finally they found themselves on an expanse of smooth snow, broken only by half a dozen crevasses and a solitary ski-track.

"I can't keep on at this pace," Alison gasped at last. "You go ahead. We'll stick to the ski-marks."

Rather reluctantly Nora left her chum and forged rapidly forward. Alison's heart was thumping painfully and her legs ached intolerably. But the faintly fluttering distress signal urged her onwards.

"Coo-ee!" Nora's voice rang out. "Hold on, we're coming. Somebody's fallen down a crevasse," she called back to Alison. "They're

waving a muffler tied to a ski. I can see now."

Half an hour later Nora had reached the scene of disaster and was bending down in the snow. A few minutes afterwards Alison joined her.

"It's Kitty Twiss," Nora spluttered, her dark eyes round with consternation. "She's lodged on a ridge ten feet down. Careful! Don't stand too near the edge."

"Hullo!" came Kitty's voice, weak but cheerful. "I've been here nearly two hours. Tumbled in but managed to land on this ridge. Somehow I pulled off a ski, tied my muffler to it and started to signal. I am thankful to see somebody. Think I've sprained my ankle."

"How can we get you out?" asked Alison anxiously.

"I'll slip off my second ski and try to bind one firmly to each arm. Luckily they have leather straps with strong springs to pull them taut. My hands are so frozen that I couldn't possibly hold anything. Then if you would both grab hold of the skis perhaps you could pull me up. But do test the snow round the edge before you begin. It may overhang and be treacherous."

Alison and Nora soon decided that they could draw Kitty up safely. It took the latter a few minutes to adjust the straps firmly, but finally she announced that all was ready.

"Lean well back," she directed. "Lucky I'm light."

"How about the ankle?" asked Nora anxiously

"Never mind that. I'll look after it."

"Pull!" directed Alison.

Fortunately the skis were only slightly curved and being made of ash were not too heavy. All the same the frozen wood was not easy to handle, and twice Alison feared that her grip was relaxing. But setting her teeth she resolutely drew Kitty inch by inch nearer the surface. Nora, being smaller, found her part taxed her to the uttermost.

"I won't let go," she muttered desperately. "Oh, Alison, do be quick!"

At last Kitty's head was level with the mountain slope, and a minute later she had her elbows in the snow. "I'm all right," she gasped faintly. "Get off the skis and just pull me by the arms. Don't mind letting go. My sound foot is resting on another shelf."

Her two rescuers grappled with the strap springs and then tossed the skis aside. Lying flat on her chest in the snow Alison clasped Kitty under the arms and drew her to safety.

"Oh-h-h!" the latter sighed, and suddenly went limp in Alison's arms.

"She's collapsed!" whispered Nora anxiously. "We must bring her round. It's so bitterly cold that she might freeze to death." Pulling off Kitty's gauntlets Nora rubbed her hands hard.

"Her eyes are *opening*," said Alison thankfully. "I say, we are in a mess. It's started to snow and it's nearly dark."

"We can still see twenty yards ahead," Nora returned. "Look here. You stay with Kitty and I'll take the skis and go to the village for help. We'll never get her down the mountain alone."

"But you've no sticks," Alison objected. "Supposing you tumble into a crevasse?" She shuddered.

"It's our only chance," returned Nora bravely. "You must try to keep Kitty conscious until I come back with help. I'll be as quick as possible." Hurriedly she strapped on the skis and prepared to depart.

"Keep to the *tracks* if you can see them," Alison urged. "Go round the steep slope. I wish I could take your place, but I know I'm hopeless."

Nora s[illegible] and her fr[illegible] into the [illegible] Kitty. Suddenly there was a sharp crack from just below and a wide sheet of snow tumbled forward, shooting straight down the ski-track.



"Pull!" directed Alison.

"An avalanche!" cried Kitty in terrified tones, sitting upright and staring after it. "It's heading straight for the winding path by the side of the steep slope. Where's Nora?" She looked round wildly.

"She's ski-ing for help," muttered

Alison. Feeling sick with horror she gripped Kitty's arm. "She'll be caught by the avalanche!" she moaned. "Oh, Kitty! Will she have a chance?"

"Very little," Kitty returned shakily. "Unless she sees the snow coming and manages to free herself from her skis. Without them it's just possible to escape. If you can keep on top of the snow you're all right. The best way is to make a kind of swimming movement with your arms and legs. But it's difficult enough to do without skis, with them it's practically impossible."

"Isn't there any hope if you're buried in snow?" queried Alison in scared tones.

"If somebody digs you out at once you won't be much the worse. But if you can't get help you must keep one arm over your nose and mouth when the avalanche descends. Then push the other arm up and try to fight your way out. But it's harder to do than to describe. It's terrible to be trapped in the snow."

"Kitty!" Alison ejaculated. "Here's another slide coming from above!"

Firmly she gripped the injured girl as a mass of soft, untrodden snow overwhelmed them. Struggling wildly as they were swept away, Alison succeeded in reaching the surface without letting go of Kitty, and together they were carried downwards on its crest. Faster and faster they shot forward, over the steep slope to the road below. Dazed and breathless Alison lay panting on the feathery surface.

"Kitty!" she called frantically, pulling herself together. Suddenly she realised that she was still holding the other girl's hand. A mass of snow smothered Kitty's body, and letting go her hold Alison dug as fast as she could. Soon she was rewarded by a glimpse of blue beret and quickly she uncovered Kitty's face and head.

"Are you all right?" she called anxiously. "If only it weren't so dark!"

"Don't worry," Kitty spluttered. "Ugh, I've a mouthful of snow. I think I can wriggle free now. It's my wretched ankle."

"Where's the village?" Alison queried. "I can't see any lights."

"About half a mile to the left, I believe. There's a bend in the road just ahead. You go and fetch help. I'll be all right."

"I sha'n't leave you," responded Alison firmly.

"But you must. There may be another avalanche any minute. Sometimes one starts several. Besides, you must get help for Nora."

"Then I'll take you with me," Alison decided. "You're light enough. Can you clasp your arms round my neck and heave yourself on to my back? Now then!"

Unwillingly Kitty struggled into

position and the bigger girl took a few steps forward. But it was heavy work, and after twenty yards Alison was forced to stop.

"If the snow were firmer I'd manage," she gasped, sliding Kitty gently to the ground.

"Another avalanche," the latter cried. "On us. Look out!"

and scrambling to her feet bent over Kitty.

"I'm sorry," she said. "My horrible clumsiness! Your poor ankle!"

"You've probably saved our lives," Kitty responded jerkily.



A mass of snow thudded beside them.

Wheeling round Alison clumsily knocked Kitty sprawling before collapsing on top of her. A moment later a mass of snow thudded beside them, completely burying the spot where they had stood a second before. Six inches of snow covered Alison, but easily she shook it off

"Look!" Alison cried. "A moving light! Hi, hi!" Desperately she shouted at the top of her voice.

"This way!" Kitty called. "Help, help!"

Several other lights joined the first and rapidly drew nearer. Half a dozen men's figures, one drawing a

sledge, loomed up in the darkness, and behind them Alison saw a familiar form.

"Nora!" she cried. "So you've escaped the avalanche! I thought you were dead." She broke off huskily.

"I'm perfectly fit," her friend assured her. "I'll tell you all about it later. That's right. They've got Kitty on the sledge. Jump up behind. The guides are on skis and will move faster than you can walk."

Unceremoniously she bundled Alison into her place, and at a sharp command from their leader the guides sped forward, dragging the sledge with them. Nora easily followed in their tracks, and just as they reached the nearest chalet another mass of snow thundered down behind them.

"What an adventure!" shuddered Alison. "Miss Fortune will be frightfully worried about us."

"One of the chalets is on the 'phone," answered Nora. "A guide has just dropped out to ring up the hotel. So she'll know we're safe. I wondered whatever had happened to you when the avalanche started."

"We're all right!" cried Kitty. "It's you. Are we going straight back now?"

"Yes, round by the road. I'll tell you my adventures. Luckily the first avalanche missed me."

"How?" exclaimed Alison. "We were positive it would sweep over the winding path."

"Well, you see, I ski-ed down the steep slope," said Nora casually.

"What!" gasped Kitty. "In the dark?"

"I thought it would be quicker," put in Nora hurriedly. "I arrived safely at the bottom and by the time the next avalanche had swept you away I'd reached the village. I collected some guides and they thought you might have been carried down to the road, so we set off to look there first."

"You have some courage," said Alison softly.

"Both of you are jolly plucky," Kitty declared. "You've saved my life. I'm no good at speeches, but you know how I feel."

"Glad we've helped a bit," Nora declared, as the hotel lights showed in the distance.

"Rather!" chimed in Alison. "Everything has ended well, after all. I've a shock for you, Nora," she chuckled to her friend. "Even my clumsiness turned out useful!"



HEATHER FOR LUCK

BY MARJORIE CLEVES

I

"WELL, thank goodness, it's fine."

Freda Guerney hung out of the window and gazed down upon the spacious lawns and flower-beds which surrounded St. Monica's. She took several deep breaths of fresh air; then closed the window and turned to the two Upper Fourthites who shared the room with her.

"Come on, you two," she cried gaily. "To-day's the day we're playing against Jayney's, and don't you forget it."

"As if we should," came drowsily from the bed where Jill Hason's curly head darkened the pillow.

The other room-mate, Iris Mossford, who completed the trio, suddenly shot out of bed.

"All right, Freddie, old girl, we'll be dressed in two ticks. This sort of thing gets into one's blood, you know. Sport, and still more sport. St. Monica's lives for sport. It's not my fault I failed in French last term. When Mademoiselle is cramming French verbs down my throat I can hear Miss Moxley bellowing in my ear, 'Shoot, Iris, shoot; will you never learn to play hockey correctly?' Is it any wonder we are games mad here?"

Iris paused at this stage through lack of breath, while Freda, who was now almost dressed, stood still in blank amazement.

Jill giggled.

"My! you're waxing eloquent first thing in the morning," she commented admiringly. "Couldn't do it myself if I tried, certainly not on an empty stomach."

Iris sat down suddenly and commenced to brush her hair vigorously.

"Let's hope we beat them," she murmured.

"Hear hear." This from Freda, who was making tracks for the door. "Hold the fort, you two; I'm going to sneak down to see if there's any post."

She vanished like a flash, but was back within a few minutes, flushed and breathless, her carroty hair, still unbrushed, flying in stray wisps round her chubby little face. She carried a small parcel.

"Hoots, Mon," she cried, gaily dancing across the room. "A parcel from my beloved brother Bobbie, all the way from Bonnie Scotland."

"I do hope it's rock," cried Iris excitedly.

Freda, full of importance, tore open the parcel; while Jill hung expectantly over her shoulder.

There was a slight murmur of disappointment from both of them as the lid came off the box, whilst Iris loudly proclaimed her dismay and disgust.

"Heather," she almost shrieked. "It's frightfully unlucky. We'll be sure to lose the match."

"Nonsense!" Freda delved her hand into the packings, but she could not quite keep the disappointment out of her voice. Bobbie was a dear to have sent them heather, but all the same rock would have been much more acceptable, especially that delicious sweet stuff that melts in your mouth.

The heather was divided into three small button-hole bunches with a tiny strip of narrow paper attached to each.

Freda scrutinised them intently.

"Play up, St. Monica's," was written in Bobbie's tiny, but neat script. There was a letter as well. Just a few lines to say that he hoped the match with Jayney's would go off O.K., and he was enclosing some real Scotch heather for luck, a button-hole for Freda and one each for her two friends. They were to be sure and wear it.

Freda doled out her friends' share.

"Let's hope it will bring us luck," she ruminated cheerfully, pinning her own spray on to her gym. tunic. "I'm a great believer in mascots and talismans myself."

Iris sniffed.

"I'm not," she remarked apprehensively. "I think it's going to bring us bad luck Heather is an unlucky omen."

"Don't be ridiculous!" laughed Jill. "We've made up our minds to beat Jayney's and beat 'em we will, heather or no heather."

Freda was struggling to get a comb through her tangled mass of hair as the breakfast-bell rang.

"Bother! It's all bells in this place. We're downright slaves to bells. I reckon we ought to have the morning off, considering it's the most important match of the season," she said heatedly.

"One of the important matches," corrected Jill. "Don't forget we're

only juniors. The seniors would probably have something to say if they heard that, all the same I'm with you in that respect. I think you ought to make a suggestion to the Head and ask her if she can *alter the curriculum or schedule* or whatever they call it and make a special concession for a morning in bed when there's an important match; what say you, Iris?"

"I'm with you in everything except this wretched heather," groaned Iris; "Freda, I'm going to chuck it away."

"You dare," shouted Freda, holding her hair-brush threateningly above her chum's head.

Jill was giggling helplessly.

"Go on, Freddie, knock her out," she cried. "There'll be one less in the team then and it will be our first stroke of bad luck."

Freda promptly lowered the brush and her eyes were twinkling mischievously.

"Come on, kids—breakfast, and we won't mention the word heather again until we're on the field."

However, in spite of her cheerful demeanour, the chums received their first set-back just before they were due to leave for Maltbury, the small town where the neighbouring school "Jayney's" was situated.

It was five minutes past two and the three were racing down the deserted corridors with their hockey sticks when they all but collided with the head girl, Diana Massingham.

Freda, who was leading the way, pulled up dead and apologised.

Diana inspected them keenly.

"Where are you kids off to? Aren't you Upper Fourth?"

"Yes," replied Freda breathlessly.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"We—we're going to Maltbury to play Jayney's. Miss Moxley told us to be at the 'bus-stop outside the school at ten past two to catch the two-fifteen, the rest of the form must have gone on."

"Yes, they have gone on," replied Diana dryly. "They went twenty minutes ago. I saw them off. They held up the 'bus until the last possible moment waiting for you three. It was ten *to* two, Freda, not quarter past."

"Great Scot," exclaimed Freda in dismay. "What are we to do now?"

"Miss Moxley is *frightfully* annoyed," commented the head girl. "You're to catch the next 'bus. You will probably get there in time for the bully-off and a nice wigging into the bargain. You've exactly five minutes, better hurry."

"My fault," Freda murmured ruefully as she led the way through a side door into the grounds. "I could have sworn she said two-fifteen."

"It's the h-heather," breathed

Iris as they tore madly down the drive. "I-I t-told you so."

The 'bus was coming. They could see it rounding the bend. It reached the drive gates at almost the same time as the three panting school-girls. Freda hailed it with her hockey stick and breathlessly they clambered in.

II

"Golly, that was a near shave." Jill sank down heavily beside Freda. Iris sat behind and unconsciously proceeded to prod an old gentleman with her hockey stick. She glanced down furtively now and then at the purple button-hole which still adorned the lapel of her coat.

Freda suddenly craned her head round and grinned at her.

"Here we are safe and sound," she scoffed. "Thought we couldn't do it, didn't you?"

Iris grunted something which sounded like "We aren't there yet"; then a fussy conductor came down the 'bus demanding, "Fares, please."

"Three returns to Maltbury," gasped Freda, holding out half a crown and sixpence.

"Eh?"

She repeated her request a little louder.

"We ain't goin' to Maltbury."

"W-what?" Freda's face filled with blank dismay. "But you must go to Maltbury," she cried. "It's our match with Jayney's."

Jill giggled openly, a titter went round the 'bus, and an old gentleman glared angrily at Iris as he received another prod from her stick.

The conductor scratched his head in slow motion, while all the time the 'bus was gathering speed.

"Look 'ere, miss. This 'bus ain't goin' to Maltbury and that's that. We can't change the route to suit you three kids."

Freda flushed scarlet. She realised she was the centre of attraction, and she simply loathed scenes.

"How far are you going then?" she ventured, trying to appear unabashed.

"En'am," he drawled. "The Maltbury 'bus is behind this one, but it branches orf; if yer want to git to Maltbury now you'll 'ave to alight at Park'am and walk across the fields; 'tain't far."

"All right," retorted Freda hurriedly. "Tell us when to get down then, will you?"

Parkham appeared to be a small straggling village composed of about a dozen or so ramshackle cottages, a a lonely shop outside which the usual loafers lounged, and a tiny church nestling amongst a crescent of trees.

They were obliged to walk the whole length of the 'bus and were both embarrassed and annoyed at the amused glances cast in their direction.

"Cut across them fields, over the railway, and then you'll come to Maltbury," volunteered the conductor, trying to be obliging.

"Thanks," murmured Freda ungraciously.

They hurried up a narrow lane skirting the church, crossed several fields, then suddenly came face to face with a gate marked "Private—Trespassers will be prosecuted."

They pulled up dead.

"What a sell!" groaned Freda, speaking for the first time since they had left the 'bus. She was still feeling rather sore.

"We seem doomed to-day, somehow," murmured Jill, glancing surreptitiously at the sprig of heather in her coat. But she didn't dare mention the word heather—it was taboo when Freda was around.

"What can we do now?" questioned Iris anxiously.

Freda frowned.

"Goodness knows. We're properly in the soup. We'll never be in time for the match. Miss Moxley will be simply furious."

"Won't she just," Jill was saying, when to their surprise a small tousled head appeared over the top of the gate.



"Are yer lorst, miss?"

It was a village boy, a ragged unkempt child, with a dirty face, but a very merry one all the same. He vaulted the gate with ease and landed almost at Freda's feet, looking up at her with an almost cheeky grin.

"Are yer lorst, miss?"

Freda bit her lip.

She really did not want to speak to this village child. She was, in fact, feeling too utterly fed up to talk to anybody just then; however, there was the possibility that he might know the way round.

"We want to get to Maltbury. Can you tell us the way?" she enquired sharply.

He pointed a grubby finger at the gate.

"Thru' there and across the railway."

"But it's private," protested Freda.

"Don't make no difference," he sniffed. "We goes all the same, my pals 'ave just gorn now, 'avin a picnic we are, only I forgot my tea an' I've got to go back fer it."

"Oh," snapped Freda. There seemed nothing else to say. She did not even bother to thank the child, but promptly turned and climbed over the gate, leaving her chums to do likewise.

"Buck up, there might be time yet," she panted as they tore across the field.

They came upon the railway suddenly and unexpectedly.

The ground sloped considerably downwards in a green mound, but it was not terribly steep and the other side of the line was quite flat. There were two fields to cross, a few houses and other buildings in the distance, and amongst them Jill picked out the spire of Maltbury Church.

"We're in sight of our quarry at last," she said with an attempt at cheeriness. "We've only got to slip across those fields and then—why, Iris, what is the matter?"

Iris had gone suddenly white.

"My hockey stick," she gasped. "I left it in the 'bus."

There was a dreadful silence, then Freda broke into a short hard little laugh.

"It is this wretched heather after all," she said tonelessly, then with a swift movement she tore it from her coat and hurled it down the railway embankment.

Her two chums watched in silence. They were all three nearer tears than they would care to admit. This was indeed the unluckiest day they had ever experienced.

"What are we to do now?" Jill was almost in despair.

Freda turned away and stood for some minutes gazing idly down at the railway line where the small unlucky button-hole had alighted. In a few minutes it would be crushed to nothing by the wheels of an express, and a good riddance too, she was thinking. As her eyes wandered farther down the line they came to rest on some moving object. She was unable at first to make out quite what it was, then it seemed to separate into small portions and she realised with swift horror that it

was half a dozen or more children. What on earth were they doing on the line? She called her friends' attention, and they gazed down in astonishment and dismay. It was dangerous indeed for such young children to be hanging about a railway line.

"I'll call to them to come off," cried Freda. "I suppose they are the picnic party belonging to that boy we met at the gate."

She put her hand to her mouth and shouted a loud halloo.

But the thin sound was carried away on the wind.

"I think we had better go down," Jill suggested urgently. "They'll never hear, and a train might come along at any moment."

She started to run down the bank, and the other two followed suit. They had to run several hundred yards along the line to get to the children, and they realised almost as soon as they arrived on the scene that something was the matter—and something serious too. One small boy, almost a replica of the one they had encountered at the gate, was lying half in and half out of the permanent way. His foot was stuck firmly in the points.

"We can't move 'im, miss," piped one child. The tears were running unchecked down his cheeks and his grubby little face was a mass of smudges.

Freda at once went down on her knees and tried to lift the child, but she realised almost at once that it was a hopeless task. She turned an anxious face up to her chums who were watching in dumb panic.

"Try and take his boot off," whispered Jill tearfully. "I read in a book once how somebody's foot was caught in a railway line and he was saved that way."

Freda promptly commenced to undo the boot, but even after she had drawn the lace right out, it was still an impossible task. The foot would not move, it was too firmly wedged.

The urgency and danger of their position was brought home to them with startling suddenness as a loud clang above them denoted that a signal had dropped. It was for the down-line track and this was the line where the child was hopelessly pinned down.

Freda's face was as white as a sheet and she was shaking violently; but she still held the child tight in her arms. He was crying quietly, dry little sobs which shook his small frame and cut Freda to the heart. As she pressed the child to her, she felt something hard touch her knee and she looked down. Something was sticking out of the boy's pocket, something bright and gleaming. Freda swiftly grabbed it as a drowning man would grab at a straw—it was a penknife. Like lightning she opened the blade and started

hacking away at the leather on the child's boot. Iris bent down and took the child's head in her lap, smoothing back the grubby curls from his little tear-stained face.

"You'll get me out, miss, won't you?" he moaned pitifully.

"Of course we will," gulped Iris.

Then Jill came to the rescue. She above a whisper. "The train's coming too. I can hear it, oh, do be quick."

"Stand back, you children," shouted Jill. "All of you. Keep off the line."

They obeyed with alacrity, almost toppling over one another in their eagerness.



"Quick!" urged Iris. "The train's coming."

had managed to procure another penknife from one of the other boys. It was a trifle blunt, but it served the purpose. Together the two girls worked feverishly. It seemed like hours to their tortured minds, but it was only a matter of minutes really.

"It's coming," cried Jill joyfully at last.

"Quick," urged Iris scarcely

"Now, Iris, pull."

Freda jumped to her feet. They were only just in time.

A sudden rush and roar and the express thundered by.

They had all landed in a confused heap at the side of the track. Freda and Iris, bruised and shaken, managed to struggle to their feet. The boy was not seriously hurt, but they

had wrenched his foot as they released him and he was also suffering badly from shock.

"We had better try and get him back to the village," quavered Freda. She was shaking visibly now that the reaction had come.

It was at this moment that several people appeared on the scene. No one knew quite whence they came, but apparently one of the children at the first sign of danger had had the presence of mind to dash along the track to Maltbury Station for help.

Now the station-master, porter, village policeman and several other men were quickly on the scene.

Amidst the chatter and babble which followed Freda suddenly caught Jill's arm.

"This is where we make our exit," she whispered. "Come on, let's beat it."

III

They slipped unobserved across the fields, through the village, and arrived at Jayney's as the church clock was striking four.

"We're just in time for tea," laughed Freda a little shakily.

Jill's helpless giggle broke out.

"Now we're for it," she groaned. "Here's Miss Moxley. She's spotted us already. Golly, I wish the express had gone over me."

The gym. mistress stalked up, flushed and angry.

"Just where have you three been?"

Freda and her two chums exchanged glances, but none volunteered a reply.

"I am disgusted and ashamed," broke in the mistress hotly. "To think that you have let me down so badly, not only me, but the whole team. I was obliged to play three Upper Fourth girls who came to watch and incidentally borrow sticks from Jayney's; however, there is not much time for explanations now. You all three look disgraceful. I don't know where on earth you've been, but it looks to me as though you've been indulging in a village brawl judging by your clothes. Miss Reynoldson will probably want to know something about it when you return; sit on that garden seat and remain there until the 'bus goes. As a punishment you will all three go without tea," and having delivered this tirade, the mistress stalked angrily away.

The chums obeyed in silence. They were feeling too utterly sick and tired to care what happened now. Jill murmured once that her "tummy" was crying out for food.

It was some two hours later that the 'bus took them back to St. Monica's. Miss Moxley kept up a rigid silence throughout the journey; the rest of the form, who had sensed hostility from the mistress, did likewise. They had lost

the match against Jayney's, and one and all were feeling decidedly "fed up."

However, upon arrival at the school, tongues broke loose and the form, chattering like magpies, crowded into the hall.

Freda and her chums brought up the rear, with Miss Moxley like a sentinel watching over them.

Through dim eyes Freda saw a shadowy form at the far end of the hall. It looked very much like a policeman. She nudged Jill's arm.

"Golly, look at that," she whispered. "They've tracked us down already." Then with a little cry, she fell forward in a dead faint.

* * *

The three culprits were tucked up safely in bed. Matron had just gone down carrying a tray containing three empty glasses which had been filled with delicious warm milk.

As the door closed softly Freda popped her head over the eiderdown.

"So ends a perfect day," she reflected with an attempt at her former old jollity, but she was looking pathetically wan and pale.

"You're to go to sleep and not talk," called Jill in a loud stage whisper. "Matron said you're suffering from shock and that faint was a bad one. We thought you were never coming round."

"First time I ever fainted in my life," chuckled Freda.

"Well, I'm glad it's all over, anyhow," came from Iris sleepily. "I for one shall never forget Miss Moxley's face when that policeman was narrating our wonderful presence of mind, etc.; I believe she could have thrown her arms round our necks and kissed us if she were capable of such a thing."

"Hm," murmured Jill. "It was rather comic, but I wonder how they spotted us?"

"It was the heather," Iris informed her gleefully. "Don't you remember, Freda threw hers down on to the line; well, the police force were nosing around looking for clues, found that, and seeing it labelled St. Monica's promptly came up here to rout us out."

"In a way the heather was lucky after all, then," said Jill, yawning. "It certainly brought us all the bad luck in the beginning, but it eventually led us to the line, and if it hadn't—well——" She broke off and shuddered.

"Don't let's talk any more about it." Freda was drawing the clothes comfortably round her chin. "I'm writing to Bobbie to-morrow to thank him for the heather," she murmured drowsily, "and I'll tell him to send rock next time."



PAM DRIVES A BARGAIN

by

BERYL C. LAWLEY

"MY goodness!" groaned Pam Bennett. "*I can't get* through. There'll be a smash!"

Tightly she gripped the steering-wheel of the green sports car. As the cumbersome lorry swayed recklessly round the sharp bend Pam stifled an impulse to scream. With a wild swerve, which caused her machine to bump madly on the road's stony surface, she succeeded *in scraping past.*

"Horrible hog! I might have been killed!"

In straightening the sports car Pam was forced to swerve across the road. Suddenly she realised that she was threatening a head-on collision with a cyclist. Hastily she crashed her right foot on what she thought was the brake.

"Oh, I've hit the accelerator!" flashed through her dismayed brain.

The car leaped forward and Pam had no choice. Quickly she swung over the steering-wheel, dashed *across the road, missing the cyclist* by inches, and managed to apply the foot-brake just as she landed bonnet-first in the ditch.

"Are you hurt?"

A tall boy of about seventeen dropped his cycle and ran up to the car. Badly shaken and half dazed, Pam screwed up a smile. Quickly she switched off the engine and *shook her head.*

"I'm terribly sorry!" she began. "Honestly it wouldn't have happened if the lorry-driver hadn't been so reckless." Her blue eyes looked apologetically upwards.

"Well, I don't think there's much damage done." The boy examined the car closely. Opening the bonnet he ran brown capable fingers over the plugs and jets. Then he stood upright and smiled cheerfully.

"What about your bike?" asked Pam, staring in dismay at the

machine lying against the opposite bank.

"That's all right," the boy returned carelessly. "But one of your front tyres is punctured. If you'll climb out for a minute I'll push the car clear of the ditch and change the wheel."

"It's awfully kind of you," said Pam gratefully. Hastily she tucked a loose strand of red-gold hair under her beret and followed his suggestion. "Let me help."

"Don't you bother! There, she's on the level. Now I can start."

"Here's the toolbox key." Pam handed it to him.

"Thanks. By the way I'm Roger Mount. I'm staying at the Hall with my aunt. I turned up unexpectedly yesterday."

"Did you? My name's Pam Bennett. I came home last Friday for half-term. The car belongs to my brother, David. It's a good one that he bought cheaply and he is awfully pleased with himself."

"Lucky you didn't smash it to pieces," commented Roger.

"It was," Pam agreed. "David would have been furious."

"Does he know that you're driving his bargain?" asked Roger dryly, fitting the jack into position.

"Not he!" Pam admitted ruefully. "Matter of fact, I've no licence. I'm not quite seventeen. I've only driven in our grounds until to-day."

"Pretty idiotic to start off alone on a main road," said Roger severely. "You're a public danger."

"Don't think I wanted to come," Pam flared, scarlet with indignation. "I had a post card from my cousin this morning offering to motor me over to Frinley to see the big tennis matches. He said he was taking a friend as well. I'm frightfully keen on games and I'm wild at missing the fun."

"What's your cousin's name?" Roger asked, ramming the spare wheel tightly in place.

"Jim Cranwell. He wrote that if I didn't turn up by ten o'clock he'd know I wasn't coming. It's just that now."

"Well, why didn't you go instead of careering along on your own and nearly killing me?"

The laughter lurking round Roger's mouth and eyes took the sting from his words, and Pam smiled back. Then she explained.

"It's Thea, my younger sister. She's studying for her Matric., and this morning she broke her glasses. Father and Mother were both out and David's on holiday, so I thought I'd better try to motor to Blaxon and have them mended."

"Ten miles!" whistled Roger. "Rather an optimist, aren't you? And supposing a Bobby had demanded to see your licence?"

"I chanced it," Pam admitted. "After all, I look quite seventeen.

And I wasn't going to drive into Blaxon. There's a car-park just outside the town."

"Pretty sporting of you to give up your own expedition," said Roger slowly. "But you're running a big risk in driving a car. Look here, I've a licence." He patted his coat pocket. "Let me come, too, and pilot your 'bus?"

"Oh, I couldn't let you bother!" Pam gasped. "You're awfully kind, but I can manage." Sticking her hands defiantly into her bazer pockets she looked determinedly at the green car.

"If you'll have me I'd like to come," Roger assured her. "Smith's general shop is just ahead. I'll leave my bike there. Give me five minutes." Jumping on his machine he pedalled away.

Soon he returned to the car and climbed into the driving-seat. Pam settled herself beside him, and soon they were running swiftly along the road to Blaxon.

"I expect Packam's will mend the glasses while I wait," said Pam, when they were on the outskirts of the town. "I'll tell them to be as quick as they can."

"I'm in no hurry," returned Roger carelessly. "Don't stay in the shop. Come and have an ice. I'll pick you up again outside."

"There's Jim!" Pam exclaimed. "In his car. Oh, you've taken the wrong road! Now we've missed him and I wanted to explain. Could you turn round and catch him up?"

"No chance, I'm afraid," returned Roger hastily. "He's streets away by now."

"I wonder why he hasn't gone to Frinley? And where's his friend?" Pam's forehead wrinkled over the problem.

"Where is Packam's?" asked Roger shortly, slowing down behind a 'bus.

"In the High Street. Turn to the left at the traffic lights. Would you please drop me as soon as you're round the corner."

Roger pulled up outside the jeweller's and Pam jumped to the pavement. Slamming the car door she ran into the shop. There were several customers already inside and she had to wait.

"Wonder why Roger didn't want to meet Jim?" she thought, rummaging in her blazer pocket for Thea's glasses. "He quite obviously avoided him. There was no need to swing down that narrow little side street."

At this point an assistant approached her and examined the broken glasses. He smiled reassuringly.

"A very simple job, miss," he informed her. "It will only be ten minutes. Will you take a seat?"

"Thanks, I'll call back," Pam returned. Leaving the case on the counter she walked to the door.

"Where's Roger?" she thought in bewilderment.

There was no sign of the green sports car. Hastily Pam looked up and down the street.

"Perhaps he's been sent on," she thought. "I'll ask the policeman."

Crossing the road Pam questioned the constable. He shook his head.

"No, miss, I've not moved him," he answered. "But I noticed a young gentleman drive away a minute or two ago."

"Oh!" gasped Pam. Realising that the policeman was looking at her curiously she pulled herself together. "Thank you," she murmured and hurried down the street. An awful suspicion crossed and recrossed her mind.

"I've no proof that he's really Miss Mount's nephew," she thought in dismay. "Supposing he's just a common thief and has stolen the car? I don't like to tell the police unless I'm certain. What shall I do?"

Reaching a cross-road Pam glanced down it. There was her brother's car, with Roger inside, standing at the far end.

"Hurrah!" Pam ejaculated, starting to run.

But before she could reach him Roger had moved away. Pam's suspicions grew stronger.

"He didn't look like a thief," she argued. "But they say you can't go by appearances. Oh, I am in a mess! If I tell the police they'll insist on hearing the whole story and there will be a dreadful row because I'm too young to drive."

Pam shivered in dismay as she pictured herself in the police court. Suddenly an idea struck her.

"Of course, Roger left his bike at Smith's shop," she reflected. "They know me, so I'll 'phone and ask if they know anything of Roger. It won't take long."

Entering a call-box Pam was soon put through. Anxiously she asked for Mr. Smith.

"Speaking, miss," came a man's voice.

"Did a Mr. Mount leave his cycle with you about half an hour ago?" Pam asked eagerly.

"A strange young gentleman left one," Mr. Smith replied. "The name on the saddle-bag was James Cranwell."

"Jim's bike!" Pam nearly dropped the receiver. "You still have the machine?" she said agitatedly.

"No, miss. When the young gentleman was here he made two 'phone-calls and told me that someone would fetch the bicycle. It was taken ten minutes ago."

"Who took it?" Pam gasped.

"A working man," Mr. Smith replied. "He spoke like a stranger to these parts. I've never seen him before."

"Thank you," Pam muttered.

Slowly she hung up the receiver and stepped out of the 'phone-box. "It's perfectly plain now," she thought bitterly. "Roger told an accomplice to fetch the bike whilst he stole the car. He must have picked up a few details about Miss Mount in the village. No wonder he didn't want to meet Jim! I suppose he sneaked his bike early this morning. What a futile idiot I've been!"

Wearily Pam returned to the High Street, trying to summon sufficient [illegible] ian. [illegible] car [illegible]

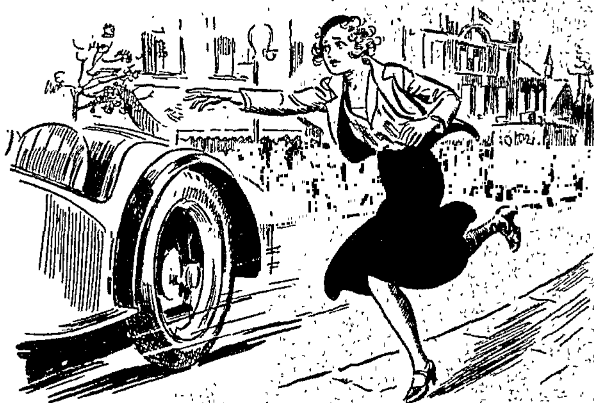
"I'll catch it," she vowed determinedly. "If only the traffic lights are red at the other end." Setting off full tilt she raced in pursuit.

Dodging the amazed shoppers Pam flew like the wind. The street seemed endless, but luck was with her. As the green car reached the corner the traffic light changed first to yellow and then red. Setting her teeth and trying to ignore the stitch in her side, Pam kept doggedly on.

"I must do it," she thought, as the yellow light flashed again.

Just as the green went up Pam reached the car. Pulling open the door she flopped into the seat beside Roger as he moved away.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed in amaze-



"I'll catch it," she vowed determinedly.

ment. "Where did you come from?"

"Pull up!" Pam commanded. "Do exactly as I tell you or I'll shout for the police."

"Here, I say!" Roger protested.

"Don't talk!" Pam rapped out. "If you do I'll keep blowing the horn." She put her hand on it menacingly.

Reluctantly Roger stopped the car and turned to his companion. "What do you want me to do?" he snapped.

"I know exactly how you've treated my cousin," Pam continued, ignoring the interruption. "All the same, I'll drive a bargain with you. Get out of the car and I won't give you away."

"You're making an absurd fuss!" Roger expostulated, nevertheless obeying.

As he reached the ground, Pam, slipping into the vacant seat, suddenly shot forward. Taking the next corner at a perilous angle she raced along the quiet side streets which took her to the opposite end of Blaxon. Stopping the car she settled down to think matters out.

"Of course I ought to have handed him over to the police," she decided furiously. "Absurd fuss, indeed! Of all the cheek! But I've got David's car back and Jim's bike was very old. I must pay him for the loss, but that's better than being summoned for driving without a licence."

Pam, turning round, began threading her way back to the jeweller's. "I daren't leave the car," she decided. "Roger might run off with it again. I wish I could meet Jim. He's probably driven into Blaxon to report the loss of his bike."

Arriving safely at Packam's, Pam requested an errand boy to ask an assistant to come out to her. The glasses were finished, and Pam paid for them and moved away.

"I'm getting on better now," she decided triumphantly. "I'll arrive home in style!"

A mile or two farther on Pam grew uneasy. "Believe I've taken the wrong road," she muttered. "This is near Jim's house. Never mind, I'll find a turning to the right."

Her improved driving made her relax her usual caution. Corners were rounded at increased speed and she did not realise that she was taking more than her fair share of the road. Suddenly, as she swerved wildly round a sharp bend, a mounted cyclist wheeling another machine came into view. Seeing the car almost on top of him the man, losing his nerve, wobbled his two bikes into one another and collapsed on top of them.

"The second time I've nearly had an accident!" flashed through Pam's dismayed mind. However, on this occasion, she made no mistake with the foot-brake and pulled up in time.

Half dazed the man scrambled to

his feet. "Nearly done for me, miss," he grumbled with a strong North country accent.

"I'm so sorry!"

Hastily Pam jumped into the road and picked up one of the cycles.

"I'm all of a tremble."

Putting her hand into her pocket Pam found a shilling.

"Get yourself some brandy," she suggested.

Taking the cycles the man leant



Pam picked up one of the cycles.

Glancing at the saddle-bag she saw the name James Cranwell written on the back. Wildly she looked round. There was not a soul in sight, but about a hundred yards up the road stood a country inn.

them against the garden wall of the inn. Sitting in the car Pam thought rapidly.

"That's Jim's bike. And I can't go into the inn and make a fuss. It would mean dragging Roger into it

and I must keep my part of the bargain."

Suddenly a smile flickered round Pam's mouth, but she hesitated. The car had a dickey in the rear. Climbing out again she opened it.

"The bike would fit there quite nicely," she decided. "Suppose I drive up quietly, put it in and then make a dash for Jim's? It's not far. I won't waste time turning round; there's a lane farther on that swings back."

Pam's heart hammered painfully as she drew up near the cycles and waited a second. "It takes some doing," she decided. "I'm the thief, now!"

The inn door was round the corner, and lifting Jim's bike Pam managed to fit it into the dickey. Then, running round to the driving-seat she scrambled inside.

"Now I'm off!" she exulted, and departed in a cloud of dust.

Two hoarse shouts came faintly after her, but Pam took no notice. Racing round the next corner she tore up the lane and emerged more gently into another main road. The cycle bumped a good deal, so she drove slowly along to Jim's house.

"At last!" she thought thankfully, turning into the drive.

The garage doors were wide open and Jim's car stood inside. Just then its owner appeared from the house.

"Hullo, anything wrong?"

"Not now," Pam said triumphantly. "But I've had such adventures with a pair of thieves. I've rescued your bike." She waved her hand towards the dickey.

"My bike! What on earth do you mean?"

"Well, it's been stolen, hasn't it?" Pam's tones were decidedly nettled.

"Great Cæsar, no! I lent it to Roger Mount, a chap I was with at school. Whatever made you abandon him in Blaxon? Luckily I picked him up. He's in the house now. Told me you were in a fearful wax all about nothing."

"Nothing!" echoed Pam indignantly. "He stole my car!"

Jim stared in amazement and then burst out laughing. "My word, that's perfect!" he spluttered. "Poor old Roger turned bandit! Oh, my stars!" He rocked with amusement.

"Surely I haven't made a ghastly mistake?" faltered Pam. "Listen." Quickly she told her cousin the story.

"You've done it this time!" Jim chuckled at the finish. "Roger was the friend I was taking to Frinley. But as you didn't turn up and he 'phoned at the last minute that he was unable to come I gave up the expedition."

"Oh, I am an ass!" groaned Pam. "How can I ever meet him again?"

"That's easily done," laughed a voice, and Roger entered the garage. "Jim lent me his cycle yesterday," he explained. "But when I saw what a hole you were in I 'phoned him from Smith's shop."

"Why did you avoid Jim at Blaxon?" Pam asked.

"Because I didn't tell him the real reason for not going to Frinley and I didn't want to have to blurt it out in front of you," said Roger, turning rather red. "I saw him again while you were in the jeweller's and I wasn't very keen on meeting him, so I drove off round a turning. Then when I came back you'd gone."

"I suppose we were chasing each other all over Blaxon," said Pam ruefully.

"Exactly. And when you were so wild with me I thought it was because I'd treated Jim shabbily. I ought to have given him the real reason, but I thought he'd chaff me. *Sir Galahad and all that!*" Roger looked horribly embarrassed.

"Talk about a couple of idiots!" Jim choked.

"Why was the other man on Jim's bike?" asked Pam suddenly.

"He's my aunt's new under-gardener. I rang up from Smith's and asked him to fetch and return the cycle."

"I have made a jolly mess!" mourned Pam. She told Roger her adventure at the Inn.

"Don't worry," the latter consoled her. "I'll soon put that right."

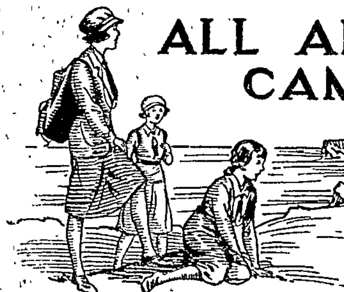
"When you've quite finished I'll have my say," put in Jim with mock patience. "You'd better both stay here to lunch. Then I'll drive Pam [illegible] and Roger [illegible]

"It's certainly safer with him," Pam acknowledged, with a wry smile.

"After that we'll all go to Frinley," Jim continued. "There's plenty of tennis this afternoon. What says everybody?"

"I'd love to!" Pam exclaimed, smiling at Roger.

"So would I," Roger returned. Then his eyes twinkled. "You'd better stay with me in David's car," he advised Pam. "I don't feel nearly as competent as you when it comes to driving a bargain!"



ALL ALONE CAMP



BY

ETHEL TALBOT

"IT seemed a regular 'all alone' spot," said Skipper.

"The very spot for us," agreed all our Company.

Skipper evidently thought the same or she would not have brought up the subject of Trepen. She had been motoring through the district far off at Cornwall's toe during the Easter holidays.

"Really looking out for a camping-place for the holiday," said she, "and I believe I found it."

We had settled down to listen, quite sure in advance that a spot chosen by Skipper, who understood our wishes to the last inch, would be absolutely perfect.

"The very post office is seven miles from the spot on the cliff that seemed *it*," said Skipper. "A perfect camp site, and no view of anything at all except sea."

"Skipper, the boat?" put in Muriel at that instant, for the sea without a boat would have meant no kind of holiday for Sea Rangers, and boats don't grow like gooseberries near such a camp site as that.

"The boat's all right," said Skipper. "There's a coast-guard's tiny cottage between us and the post office. I saw the coast-guard; he is very old and he is, I gather, a coast-guard by courtesy rather than anything else, since he's allowed to keep on his cottage, although the coast-guard service round that coast has been reduced in recent years. He is retired, and except for himself and the old folk at the post-office shop I saw no soul at all. He said he had the gulls for company—well, we shall be too far off to be compay for him. We four shall have the cliff to ourselves, a regular all alone Camp."

"We four" meant the three of us and Skipper. We are not a full Company, we only wish we were. But four can do a good deal with a boat, and Betty and Muriel and I knew that. We knew something

else when Betty and I, being next-door neighbours, arrived at the station together on the *morning of* our start. We met Skipper wearing a grave expression.

"All alone, Skipper?" we enquired.

"Yes!" she said.

Then we, too, looked grave.

Sore throats can't be winked at when camping is contemplated; quite a bad *sore throat* had assailed Muriel that morning; she had 'phoned to Skipper and the all alone Camp was to consist of three instead of four. It was of Muriel that we thought most, of course, but with numbers limited already, the loss of one member meant a big drop. For three in a *boat aren't by any means the same* as four; to say nothing of the extra jolliness of having Muriel enjoying things too.

"Muriel said she'd caught a germ from some milk. Just as well the germ took its way with her before the holiday started," remarked Skipper. "We'll be all alone, and no chance of getting a doctor."

We were to be more all alone than we'd expected; without Muriel. Incidentally, too, Muriel is our best boatman. Skipper, of course, has *her boatman's licence, otherwise she* wouldn't be skipper, but Muriel, whose folk had lived at the sea-side before she took up a new home with her parents in town, understood the ways of boats far better than the remaining pair, Betty and I. "All the more need for you two to practise," remarked Skipper as the miles flew by, and the hours with them. We didn't want to talk much, and after a little the country we were passing through grew almost too glorious for words. We alighted at the nearest station to Trepen, took ourselves and our traps into a rattling *old 'bus; found eyes staring at us* from country-folk who had evidently never seen Rangers and their paraphernalia before, and finally alighted at a back-of-beyond spot and took directions for a five-mile walk across the heather.

"Never seen ladies like you before in these parts" said our informant, "*although——*". Then he seemed to want to turn the subject.

"Although . . . ?" said we, wondering if, possibly, just one Company of Guides or Rangers might have been near. "Are there any Guide Companies around within walking distance?"

"Trepen, is it? Not that I know of, and would you ladies, being foreigners, be knowing about Trepen? 'Tis said that the cliff, there, is haunty like."

We didn't listen; we just laughed. *We dumped down* our traps as the 'bus went on, with the man looking rather anxiously after us.

"Better ask the old coast-guard about that there," he called.

"We're not likely to, are we, Skipper?" said I, arranging our impedimenta—only that isn't the word for traps, however heavy, that are preparations for the most glorious camping holiday in the world. Three, naturally, are more burdened than four would be, and we missed Muriel's hefty figure, just as much as she, probably, was missing us.

"Muriel's with us in spirit, I'm sure," said Betty.

"Don't let the 'bus conductor hear you talking of 'spirits,'" said I, "or he'll think that Rangers believe in the spooks he was talking of."

We all laughed, the three of us, as we strode along through the heather, taking our time, taking our lung-fulls of sea air, taking even our tea-meal *en route* to lighten—or shift—our load.

"We've all the time there is for a week of nights and days," quoth Skipper.

"And Bony was a warrior," chanted Betty, "so we can fight these traps along, in time. Not that I *mean to* be '*bony,*'" remarked she, taking another slice of cake. "Skipper, what about milk? We'll never do this trek to the post-office shop, every day."

"It's got to be tinned, this time," said Skipper. "In spite of the fact that poor Muriel's sore throat is supposed to be caused by fresh milk, I didn't bring it for that reason."

We all laughed again, and [illegible] on after our first meal towards [illegible] camp site, where our supper-meal would be taken.

Oh, that lovely spot! Oh, [illegible] Muriel! Oh—if we'd been warned away from Trepen cliffs by the 'bus conductor's lugubrious suggestion! It was superb; high above the sea, and yet sheltered by a higher cliff from the wind—just the spot for Rangers to rave over, and to remember for always. We were going to remember that all alone cliff in many ways, but in one certain way that we didn't guess then. That evening we'd no time for guessing; dogged had to do it, and with might and main. *There were only three of us,* though Skipper worked like two; we did miss Muriel as we put up the tent; collected fuel; made the fire; got the beds ready; cooked supper. Oh yes, a whole troop of Rangers would have needed no more preparations than those that were needed for us three.

"Oh Skipper . . . BED!" sighed Betty as soon as supper was over. "Just as soon as I've turned in I shall be asleep."

"I expect Muriel is sick of bed, and with us in spirit as she told Skipper she would be," said I.

"Taps," remarked Skipper, "and then we'll turn in."

A queer thing happened after we'd sung Taps!

As the last words died away I

thought, I felt sure, that somebody else was singing, too.

That was nonsense, of course; absolute. It couldn't have been true, and I was sure of that because evidently neither Skipper nor Betty had heard the sound.

"I say, Flora," yawned Betty, "what's up? You look quite strange."

"Well, we needn't feel strange here," said Skipper. "Feeling home-sick, Flora?"

I laughed, I was glad to laugh it off, but, somehow, the feeling persisted. "Could it have been possible for Muriel to be thinking of us singing Taps, and for me to have heard her singing too? Of course there wasn't anyone," thought I, and instantly fell asleep, to sleep the night through without a single break.

"Now for the boat," said Skipper next morning. "It's tied up in a cave only *half a mile along the shore* below the cliffs, for I saw it, at Easter. It's never used, but quite shipshape." We waded along, in and out of the water, having already bathed before breakfast, until we reached the spot. There was the boat, and as tidy and topping a little craft as we could wish to step into and row away in.

"Poor Muriel," remarked Skipper. "And we counted on her for a couple of oars! You two take an oar apiece, and then we'll manage."

Neither Betty nor I are expert oarswomen; we'd camped before, but we'd not had too much experience on sea water, and the pulling of one oar was quite enough for us. Muriel could have managed a pair, likewise Skipper, of course, and we'd have got along splendidly.

"If we ever want to go far out we'll have to invite the coast-guard man," remarked Betty.

Skipper shook her head at that, however, and informed us that the old coast-guard-by-courtesy was too rheumatic now to take an oar. The fact that we'd got the undivided use of the boat for our week meant that, and we rowed on, more than content, that day at any rate, to spend hours lazily enjoying our glorious happiness on this Cornish sea.

"We haven't seen a single ship, Skipper," said I lazily.

"We're rather off the Channel, in a kind of pocket," said Skipper, "*but storms no doubt do find this* channel out, though large craft would keep farther out, perhaps, than our horizon line. There are rocks, too; I got a map from the coast-guard when I was here. He pointed out a place where there was once a pretty bad wreck."

"Perhaps the 'bus conductor's spook yarns dated from then," said Betty lazily, as we turned for shore. "Didn't he say something about . . . ."

I suddenly remembered the un-

expected singing voice that I had heard.

"Skipper, are there mermaids?" I asked.

Well, why not, I enquired as they both laughed; there is, anyway, the Forsaken Merman poem, as I told them. I didn't say more though, for they seemed the more amused as I grew more heated. Somehow I didn't want to give up that singing voice, and yet I wanted a reason for it that Rangers could believe in before I told them. I didn't tell them then, anyway; and we rowed home.

"Flora, fly and look at the stew," said Skipper, "while Betty and I see to the boat."

I flew.

Muriel should have been cook; we'd settled all the duties before coming, of course; I was to have been log-keeper, and cooking has never been my strongest point as a Ranger. I had set the stew going, however, and it seemed just in the pink of perfection ready for us.

"Not burned dry, eh, Flora?" called Skipper, coming up the cliff-side.

I peered in.

Somehow, I got a kind of jolt.

We'd been out for hours; stews do boil away a good deal, but this hadn't boiled away at all. Queer? I wondered if there was any reason to account, for the fact that the stew, left on a fire which might well—me being rather amateurish—have boiled it away, was O.K! "Well, stews can't be uncanny," I decided, though I had been surprised.

"Cheers! Muriel herself couldn't have made a better stew than this. Just cooked to a turn," said Betty as we began the meal. "I bet if she's here in spirit as she said, she's thinking you are a jolly good cook."

"Not hungry, Flora? I hope you've not got a touch of the sun," remarked Skipper, as I put down my fork at Betty's words.

Stupid, wasn't it, and I a Ranger! I wasn't worthy of being one if I had such idiotic thoughts. But Betty's words had somehow fitted in. Of course Muriel was far away, but could Muriel, herself, have been singing Taps in unison with us last night? and could she "in spirit" have helped to make the stew the success it was? "I do feel a bit silly," said I truthfully, for it was utter silliness: only, two things had happened for which I couldn't account!

"Lie down, Flora, and take charge of the Camp this afternoon," remarked Skipper.

Orders are orders; I stayed in charge of All Alone Camp, resting in the shade, and Skipper and Betty went for a hike across the moor. It was heavenly with the gulls calling overhead, and utter loneliness all round. I fell asleep at last and wakened to hear Betty's voice.



"Not burned dry, eh, Flora?" called Skipper.

"Hullo! We've found you out," she shouted.

"I'm in, not out," I replied, leaping up and feeling utterly refreshed.

"Been down to have a squint at the boat, haven't you, Flora?" said Skipper. "Betty tracked you by your footprints."

"Now, didn't I say, Skipper, that they were more Muriel's size," laughed Betty.

"Muriel's not here. Flora, you're looking pale," said Skipper professionally.

"I've been asleep. I haven't stirred," said I.

"Seems as though you've been sleep-walking. Such things do happen, although it was probably one of this morning's footprints," remarked Skipper.

That was all; neither of them thought of the matter again, and I might not have, except for what Betty had said. The footprints "looked like Muriel's." Utterly silly, of course, and with me being a Ranger, all wrong! And yet on account of my experiences, each of which separately didn't amount to much, All Alone Camp didn't seem quite so "all alone" as Skipper and Betty thought—not to me. I simply hurled my unrangerish feelings from me; never, in all my life, had I done anything else but grin at the idea of spooky happenings, and these weren't spooky. Not yet, anyway.

Not until we'd been at All Alone Camp for three days. They were utterly lovely days, the weather was perfect. Betty and I simply stared when on the evening of the third day Skipper began scanning the sea with a new kind of expression in her eyes.

"Planning to-morrow, Skipper?" we asked.

"Seems to me that to-morrow is thinking of changing its plans." Skipper spoke in a weather-wise tone. "Those gulls mean something and so does that cloud on the horizon. I shouldn't be surprised if the fisher-folk are expecting a storm."

"Oh Skipper, we've not had one single practice at rowing a pair of oars, Flora and me! Don't say," groaned Betty, "that the sea's going to start storming."

Everything stormed that night.

It came on suddenly, to Betty and me, though no doubt Skipper the weather-wise knew the signs. We felt the heaviness of the thunder in the air as the storm brewed away over the sea. It was hot; too hot almost to breathe, and we weren't sorry when we heard the first hint of thunder. "There are caves below," Skipper had said, "and we'll be prepared for a storm."

Skipper wasn't prepared, by experience anyway, for that storm! Perhaps even Trepen wasn't used to such storms, for the gulls were half demented before it had properly begun. Perhaps they knew what was coming.

The sea turned quite suddenly into mountains; the wind roared, and the lightning flashes irradiated the whole sky. Even though it was early evening the clouds were so dark that it seemed as though midnight had come. In between the flashes there was an eerie hush which seemed to lie behind the fury of the storm.

" Good thing Muriel's out of this," whispered Betty.

And, just as she said so, Skipper turned.

" Muriel? I was just beginning to wish she were here. See . . it *is* a boat."

We understood her words as soon as she had finished speaking. For a moment we stood spell-bound looking out to sea as another flash lighted up the scene.

Some way out, there were rocks, as we knew. We'd skirted round them in rowing practice, but never had we seen, until now, a single soul at Trepen. And these poor souls did not look like Trepen folks; they seemed to be trippers, caught in the squall, and, just for a little while, in the half-safety of the rocks.

But, as we knew at once—we had got to get going even without Muriel, who was the best boatman of our Company.

" We'll do what we can, Skipper," gasped Betty as we fled from our cave of shelter towards the boat; ".Flora and I together can pull one pair of oars."

But would two pairs of oars manage the distance? We had to do what we could. We might rescue the two terrified folk who, otherwise, would certainly perish in the swirling water around their capsized little craft. Yes, we might do it, and we'd got, might and main, to try to pull it off. We pushed the boat down towards the shore.

Was it true? The boat seemed, after a little, not quite so hard to push through the blinding rain and the darkness of the storm; not quite so hard for the three of us. I had a sudden feeling that someone was helping from behind. And as I turned I saw . . . the Ranger!

She did not speak; she was about Muriel's size; she could not be there really; it must be a dream; I was certain of that. The whole thing was a nightmare until she had come, for it seemed so uncertain that we should ever reach those rocks. But . . . it changed; she was helping, too. That, after an instant's gasp, was all I cared about.

Skipper had taken her place in an instant; Betty and I shared a pair of oars, and I was not surprised somehow; I seemed to take it for granted, when the girl—who might have been Muriel if Muriel had been with us—took her place behind and wielded the last pair of oars, the necessary pair of oars, as Muriel would have done.

I only knew that because of her

we would do it; I only knew that behind Betty and I, unsuspected by Betty, and perhaps, even by Skipper, there sat, rowing strongly, this Other Ranger. And the sea seemed at our command, now there were four of us instead of three. Around us the billows raved; speech was impossible; the thunder roared and the lightning flashed, but somehow I knew we'd reach the rock, because of that Other Ranger who was helping.

And we did. Against a fury of waves Betty and I battled with our oars, and so did the Ranger behind us. The sight of the stranded couple of holiday-makers within reach of the rope that Skipper threw meant that we had almost done it.

I can't remember much else; I know that the girl on the rock was slipped into the noose and that she reached our boat; I know that the rope was thrown again and that her companion followed her on board; but even those happenings seemed less real, at the time, than the fact that that Other Ranger was helping, silently but strongly, and I knew that it was because of her help that we had managed to pull the rescue through.

The tide was with us as we turned back to the shore. The return journey seemed a dream still, as, half exhausted we pulled our craft home. I only knew that we should reach there, however tired I was, because of that Other Ranger. That was all.

And then, as we reached the shore, she disappeared into the darkness.

"Skipper . . ." I cried, and pointed into the darkness after her. "But for her we should never have done it." Then, for the first time in my life, and the last time I hope, I forgot everything, even the rescued people and the storm, and fainted.

I woke up lying in the cave. The storm was abating and Skipper was speaking to Betty in the doorway.

"She will wake up feeling better," said Skipper. "It was a long pull and a strong pull, but they will be well looked after at the coast-guard's house."

I knew, half asleep as I still was, that she was speaking of the couple we had rescued. They were safe, then, and things had been going on while I was lying still. Only there was still that Other Ranger of whom they were not speaking. Had they not seen her? Had they not realised, as I had realised several times during the Camp, that there had been a presence there beside ourselves.

"Skipper . . ." I called. "Oh, Skipper. Did you see her? We would never have pulled it off? They would have been drowned but for that Other Ranger."

Skipper came along, wearing her usual smile, and offered me a cup of broth made on the cave campfire, and nodded.

"Yes, I saw her," said Skipper.

"Who was she?" I whispered.

Skipper continued speaking in her ordinary cheery voice. "She came along because of the storm. She knew we were here, and the old coast-guard was worrying. There was no time to explain things, and besides, she is rather shy. She is, so she told me just before she left, the coast-guard's granddaughter, and a Lone Ranger."

"Oh Skipper, that explains the voice that sang Taps with us; and the stew; and the footprints!" They thought I was delirious, but I was not; I lay st[illegible] piecing things together and un[illegible]ding.



I woke up lying in the cave.

As long as I live I shall never forget the wonderful feeling of safety that came to me as we rowed out towards the wreck, with the Other Ranger, whether from Heaven or Earth, helping us as all Rangers do, to carry on.

Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London
981.416